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Editorial



Aisake Casimira

The Pacific, since the independence of many countries, has been relatively peaceful. In the last decades, however, the pace of development has changed the relatively peaceful nature of the Pacific Island countries. Environmental concerns, ethnic conflicts, identity concerns, religious concerns – Pentecostal movements - economic realities – poverty, unemployment and their social consequences – have all contributed in significant ways to the heightened tensions in the region. While these issues seem isolated, they nonetheless, are interconnected.

Along side these socio-political trends is the vulnerability of the Pacific communities. Perhaps as a result of its vulnerability and in response to the need to articulate a meaningful response to the issues raised by the contemporary Pacific, there has been an increasing interest in contextual theology by the Pacific Churches. SPATS facilitated a workshop on contextual theology in October 2001. It aimed to build the capacities of Pacific Churches in doing contextual theology. But to some extent, there is no clear framework within which a Pacific contextual theology can be articulated. What the Pacific has are divergent views on contextual theology and its methodology. But in the last decade, there is an emerging

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Background in sociology and theology. He is a member of the Editorial Board of the Journal of the South Pacific Association of Theological Schools.

view that ‘contextual theology’ is primarily theologizing about Pacific cultures in the contemporary world. That is to say that the primary task of contextual theology is to justify cultural and traditional interpretations of contemporary issues.

The view is partly influenced by the growing assertion among Pacific people of their independence and inter-dependence, firstly as distinct ethnic identities and secondly, as people of the Pacific. While the experience can be one of affirmation and celebration, it can also be limiting given the impact of issues such as economic globalisation, poverty and environmental concerns. The danger is that one may end up glorifying culture to such an extent that contextual theology has little contribution to cultural and social transformation; that culture is always liberating and life-giving reality. This is one of the major challenges in the articulation of a Pacific ‘contextual theology’ framework; that theologizing can not be done strictly from a traditional cultural point of view, though it is one aspect of doing local theology. Hence, what is also crucial to this exercise is the need to articulate and define the ‘formative factors’. These could act as reference points to doing contextual theology in the Pacific. The contributors to this issue attempt in their writings to face up to the above challenge.

The second part of the ECREA analysis focuses on the attempt to constructively develop a framework for conflict resolution and peace-building. Underlying it is the view that interconnectedness of people and their social setting is a far more complex reality than what is perceived as a purely ethnic problem. Hence in that sense, a major part of peace-building is looking at the root causes of conflict – such as poverty, economic disparities, perceptions, economic and power interests, and resource distributions and the sustainability of the environment. Identifying the root causes is an important step to locating the resources for peace building from secular and religious sources.

Martin Everi, in his article on the environment proposes the need to articulate an Eco-theology in the Pacific and for the Pacific, drawing on the life experiences of people, their realities, their cultural and traditional



folklore. But at the same time, as he points out, the richness of such a theology can do well to draw from the wealth of the Bible and teachings of the Church. He lists some of the formative factors: experience, teachings of the Church, Biblical theology that are essential for the development of a Pacific Eco-theology. While he alludes to the cultural and traditional resources that can assist the Churches in their reflection on the environment, he also stresses the contemporary experience of Pacific people as an important aspect in any attempt to articulate an Eco-theology for the Pacific. The crucial aspect of justice in relation to the environment and in relation to how people organise - economically, politically and socially - their communities are important issues in such an attempt.

However, one important aspect in the attempt to articulate any theological responses is the need for sound and credible basis in Biblical studies, in particular the discipline of textual criticism. It is, therefore, important that this discipline is given a higher priority in theological education. This will test the underlying assumptions of theological thinking about the environment, conflicts and peace-building programmes, and communication. As Holger Szesnat points out, what is critical in the area of biblical theology is textual criticism, which he says is a discipline that is waning or at the most a lesser priority in theological education. Part of theological reflection is the skill and ability to test Biblical texts that give rise to theological assumptions, especially when these assumptions play an influential role in how Christian faith communities view and respond to socio-political issues such as environmental concerns and ethnic conflicts. Another crucial component in theological reflection is how the message is passed onto the ordinary Christian person.

Ralph Teinaore stresses the importance of witness, which in itself is a life-long vocation for each individual Christian. While witness is the ideal form of 'communication' where it assists in the transformative and redemptive purposes of God, it nonetheless relies on specific forms of communication such as preaching, teaching and theological learning to be effective in the task. How theology is done and its education is

carried out obviously impact on how ordinary Christians bear witness or not at all, to their faith. One of the critical problems in ‘contextualizing’ communication is the tendency to equate Gospel values with traditional cultural ones. An example of this is the issue of discipleship where following one’s traditional leaders is equated with the Gospel’s demand for genuine discipleship. This is an issue that contextual theology needs to address.

Doing theological reflection in the Pacific may do well to take heed of the ideas that are put forward in the following articles. And while there is great interest that the Pacific sees theological education from its perspective and thus more relevant to its context, the task of theological reflection is first and foremost reflecting together with people on their faith experiences which may not necessarily be culturally bound but may include contemporary experiences on poverty, economic marginalization, displacement and social exclusion.



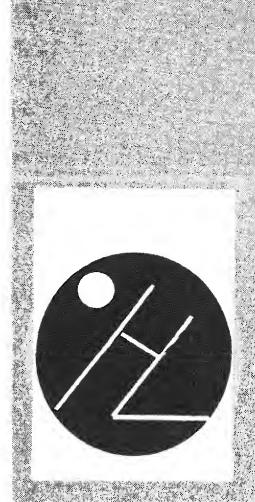
(Second part of an article by ECREA on "Analysis of Fiji's Political Crisis" the first part of which was printed in Issue 25, 2001)

Remembering the Past for the Future

The Way Forward: Strategies for Peace-Building

The military coups of 1987 came as a serious blow to Fiji's development. Their repercussions set the country back at least ten years. Yet there was a positive learning experience as well. Whatever the real motivation may have been for the coups, they brought with them the demand that indigenous Fijian interests be heard and addressed and there was a strong widespread feeling that this should be done. The years that followed saw a lot of work being done by many people to address the outstanding indigenous issues in Fiji and yet balance these against international demands for democracy. The 1997 constitution was the culmination of much consultation and its almost universal acceptance was received with great rejoicing. It appeared that Fiji had finally 'got it right' which led to its official return to the Commonwealth.

Yet within a few years Fiji experienced another coup with the claim that indigenous Fijian interests still had not been addressed and that the 1997 constitution must be abrogated. As noted earlier, the reasons for the May 19th



by ECREA

(Ecumenical Centre for Research, Education & Advocacy - formerly FCC Research Group)

coup were certainly more complex than the declared ‘cause’. But it was obvious that in the perception of many indigenous Fijians their concerns had not been fully addressed and many fears – real or imaginary – remained to disturb their sense of security in their own land. One thing should now be abundantly clear to all – *we must get it right this time* for the sake of this country’s future and its young people.

A Christian Response – Understanding Hopes and Aspirations, Griefs and Fears

Human life is, always and everywhere lived with a mixture of hopes and joys, griefs and fears. Many of these arise out of the social, economic and political realities of the time. Conflicts of interests mean that the hopes and aspirations of some are the anxieties of others, and that the joys of some become the fears and disquiet of others. Hopes and aspirations generate the zeal to struggle for their realisation. The intensity of that struggle can frighten and unsettle those who stand to lose as these aspirations begin to be realised. Fear and anxiety lead people to close ranks in defence of their interests, often setting up oppressive structures to maintain them. Zeal for change can also generate destructive violence.

Such clashes of hopes and fears and the heightened conflicts to which

In Fiji, racial politics, policies and attitudes have aggravated the inequalities common to many societies

they have led make up much of Fiji’s political history. Amid hope and expectations of rebuilding a new Fiji, it is important to name the experiences of the past which have been marked by selfishness and

suffering, struggle and conflict. In Fiji, racial politics, policies and attitudes have aggravated the inequalities common to many societies.

Christians believe that God created human beings in love and truth. He gifted them with dignity and called on them to respect one another and the world in which they live. Through their own free will, they departed from God’s intention for them and have fallen under the destructive



power of sin. Human society tends to reflect the fallen state of humanity. Much of the Old Testament law and the witness of the prophets attempted to restore and maintain human dignity and mutual respect by enshrining the love and compassion of God in social justice, expressed in law and economics. The prophets especially, persistently called people to return to the covenant of love by reminding them of God's love and consistently called for exercise of justice in their relationships with one another. In his life teachings, Jesus endorsed and extended these principles; and by dying and rising he became the source of grace through which the power of sin is finally broken. In Christ, Christians are called to be agents of re-creation, love and social justice committed to God's work of redemption and healing.

Jesus proclaimed the kingdom of God. He taught that this vision of his father knows no boundaries – religious or ethnic, and it relates to the poor in a special way: "Blessed are you poor, because yours is the reign of God" (Lk 6:20). He rejected the legalism of some of the Scribes and Pharisees who laid heavy burdens on people. He broke the Sabbath law, as it was then interpreted, in order to affirm something greater: the welfare and dignity of the human person made in the image of God: "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath." (Mk 2:27-28; 3:1-6; Jn 7:23). Jesus presents people with the law of love and compassion, principles that he lived by and for which he died. These principles become for Christians the principal way of ordering all our social relationships.

In Fiji, Christians have failed to follow this law of love, and must repent and seek forgiveness. Nevertheless this law of love remains a fundamental principle, beneficial for all people, which needs to be taken into account in rebuilding Fiji and in the formulation of a new vision. It leaves no room for exclusive privileges and the protection of selfish interests, but address instead the equality and worth of all. Love and justice are not opposites; indeed just social and economic arrangements are one way in which God's love should be expressed.

Throughout history, people have struggled to maintain human dignity and protect human rights against the pressure of vested interests. Today, Fiji citizens are called to continue that struggle. Although an ideal society can never be fully realised, the process of securing greater justice, protection and freedom for its people should be part of rebuilding Fiji. For Christians, that same process is an entering into God's work of extending his kingdom. Jesus showed the love of God for his broken creation in laying down his life to bring together into one new humanity those forced apart by past and recent conflicts. The racial barriers erected and the destruction caused by politics of race are directly addressed by the hope of healing and genuine reconciliation which Jesus' message offers.

The implications arising out of the Christian faith in the person and message of Jesus would impel Christians to create a caring and just society. For Christians, peace and reconciliation therefore has to:

- Redress the evils of the past, including corruption and mismanagement of public moneys
- Act positively to overcome the disadvantages resulting from past social, political and economic injustices
- Protect the weak, dispossessed and the marginalised irrespective of race and religion
- Respect the human dignity and worth of all as made in the divine image of God
- Safeguard citizens from the greed and aggression of others
- Protect the environment by acting as stewards and custodians of the land and seas
- Enshrine the values of truth and freedom, justice and peace.

Suggested practical steps

Peace building and reconciliation must take place at all levels of society. It is a process that will take time and along the way painful but necessary



for any genuine effort at peace-building to happen.

As Hoare (1999: 21) notes:

Peace building must continue overtime with various roles and functions and strategies coming into focus to respond to and transform different phases of the conflict. Peace building and reconciliation must take place Using a dynamic model of conflict permits us to anticipate future phases and search for preventative measures of conflict transformation... The means for transforming such a situation is in arriving at a correct analysis of the root causes of the conflict and finding a vision of a just society in which all ethnic communities can feel secure.

He proposes targeting the middle-level leadership in all sub-sectors of Fiji society, for example, teachers and local church leaders to effectively bring about reconciliation and resolving ethnic conflicts. By using Hoare's strategies for peace building, this paper proposes a framework for the important task of peace building and reconciliation (*ibid*: 25).

First, it is important to discover the root causes and the various dimensions -racial, religious, economic, political - of the conflicts.

This demands sound social and historical analysis. As seen above, some appreciation of history is necessary if the current situation is to be understood in its proper perspective. Moreover, unless Fiji learns from the mistakes of history it is bound to repeat them. Political, racial, religious and economic issues have been deeply interwoven down through the years of Fiji's history. The so-called 'racial' explanation for Fiji's conflicts is too simple and misleading yet it has been trotted out by many foreign journalists as a plausible explanation to a gullible world audience. The truth is far more complex.

There are power struggles among traditional indigenous Fijian elite and the constituencies they represent. Religious overtones add fuel to the racial and political conflicts when Christians demand Fiji to be a Christian

state and thus use religion to justify the domination of one race by another. In that respect, the Christian leaders have not been able to bridge the racial divide.

The so-called ‘racial’ explanation for Fiji’s conflicts is too simple and misleading yet it has been trotted out by many foreign journalists as plausible explanation to a gullible world audience. The truth is far more complex

economic policies see no need for the more equitable distribution of wealth and resources and consequently Fiji witnessed an increase in crime and deepening social frustration among many – especially rural communities and urban youth.

Second, what are the issues that need to be addressed to prevent a recurrence of such crisis in the future?

This would involve looking seriously at the real and perceived grievances of the indigenous Fijians as well as the hopes of Indo-Fijians.

(a) *Some of the perceptions amongst indigenous Fijians, which need to be addressed, have been mentioned previously:*

- Indigenous Fijians are poor while Indo-Fijians are rich;
- Indigenous Fijians should be paramount in their own land;
- Indigenous Fijians should be dominant in the leadership of the nation;
- Fiji should be declared a Christian state;
- Indigenous Fijians have been generous in making land and resources available yet they see others prosper and little in return come back to them;
- Commerce and business sectors are a preserve of Indo-Fijians;
- Indigenous Fijian land and fishing rights must be assured and protected;



- The value of democracy needs to be balanced against the need to protect indigenous rights and interests.

(b) The hopes of many Indo-Fijians would hinge around the following issues:

- A democratic constitution to guarantee their rights as citizens and provide a sense of security;
- That Fiji sees itself as a multi-cultural and multi-religious nation;
- That steps be taken to provide some security over land leases.

(c) Over the years four important issues seem to constantly re-emerge.

- The need for improvement in the education of indigenous Fijians – involving more serious family commitment and individual motivation as well as better teachers and resources.
- The need to develop indigenous expertise in the business and commercial sector. The ‘hand-out’ mentality implied in the recent ‘blueprint’ provides no long-term solution for authentic indigenous Fijian development. The scandal following the policies of ‘affirmative action’ for indigenous Fijians after the 1987 coups should not be repeated. Loans and scholarships made rich indigenous Fijians richer and left ordinary Fijians as they were. Thus the gap between rich and poor indigenous Fijians was widened and many were left frustrated especially those in the rural areas.
- The crying need for government to address poverty across the board – irrespective of race.
- The need for the proper distribution of wealth in the nation to prevent inequality. There is a danger that, in the desire to promote economic recovery, policies of the past will be repeated resulting in privileges for investors and unjust wages, poor working conditions, and harsh labour laws for workers.

Third, what are the practical steps
that need to be taken
in addressing these issues?

There is an urgent need for on-going reconciliation. The setting up of a reconciliation ministry by government is more than symbolic.

It underscores the urgency with which the issue must be addressed. It is a priority for the present and the future of Fiji as a nation – not only for government but also for the Churches and religious organisations as well as women's groups, Unions and other NGOs

A government ministry can facilitate reconciliation but it cannot be addressed simply from the top. It must take place also at the grassroots level. For reconciliation to work at the national level, the central issue of ethnic politics must be addressed at the personal and communal levels because ethnic politics has played a major role in the deep-seated divisions in the nation. The reconciliation process must urgently seek to expose and do away with the politics of ethnicity if there is to be a new liberating future.

The reconciliation process must not become politicised nor narrowed

There is a need for each ethnic group to move away from racial stereotypes and become 'self-critical' because reconciliation and healing demand a 'conversion of mind and heart' rooted in acknowledging and forgiving

down to stereotype ethnic issues. There is a need for each ethnic group to move away from racial stereotypes and become 'self-critical' because reconciliation and healing demand a 'conversion of mind and heart' rooted in

acknowledging and forgiving. The acknowledging process must critically look at how, at the personal and communal levels, the politics of race has affected people and shaped their perceptions of other ethnic groups including their social and economic development. This involves a critical look at the social and cultural structures of each ethnic group and how politics of race has influenced and shaped policies and attitudes.

As such the process of reconciliation is tied up with the need to articulate a vision of a just society and the search for a national identity.

The need for grassroots education. Associated with reconciliation is the need for grassroots education on a number of issues around which



there is misunderstanding and outright ignorance. Three issues will suffice as examples:

- Poverty and inequality: the myth that 'Indians are rich and Fijians are poor' can easily be dispelled by an explanation of the analysis of poverty and inequality presented in the Fiji Poverty Report (1996). The Report makes it clear that poverty and inequality are issues that cut across the board and cannot be seen in purely racial terms. In fact, Indo-Fijians cane cutters and many of the Solomonese community are amongst the poorest people in Fiji.
- Where lease money goes: many individual Fijians seemed unclear about the system of distribution of lease money from land leases. Information and education on this is vitally important. In view of economic disparities within the indigenous community, there needs to be a re-examination of their system of distribution and whether or not ordinary indigenous Fijian receive their fair share of the leases monies.
- The constitution: misunderstanding and deliberate misinterpretation led to unnecessary confusion in the minds of many about constitutional guarantees of indigenous Fijian rights and interests. For future social and political stability, it is important that the ordinary person be informed of its provisions, safeguards and protection of basic human rights of all and of indigenous interests and rights.

The need to re-examine the role of Christianity. There is an urgent need for the Churches to make a thorough examination of the role of Christianity in justifying ethnic politics and fuelling racial and political conflicts. Some Christian Churches have allowed themselves to be used for nationalistic agenda rather than for the agenda of

There is an urgent need for the Churches to make a thorough examination of the role of Christianity in justifying ethnic politics and fuelling racial and political conflicts

the Kingdom of God as preached by Jesus. The various statements by the mainline Churches and the acknowledgement by the Methodist Church that it was saddened and ashamed at the lawlessness and violence

and that they take responsibility for failing to teach our people, who make up the majority of the perpetrators and supporters in these unlawful activities, points to the need for the Churches to educate their people about the true meaning of Christianity.

Jesus' call for his followers is to love and to share what they have. Moreover, the Biblical call to protect one's God-given land needs to be balanced against the Biblical call to care for and find a place for 'strangers, widows and orphans' who have come to share this land. It would seem that the Churches need to play a more prophetic role (cf. Manfred Ernst, *Winds of Change*). Prophetic statements from the Church leaders are important – particularly if they are followed up with decisive action. The Kingdom of God is about treating each other as brothers and sisters in the one family of God; it is about forgiveness; it is about inclusiveness, love, outgoing generosity and compassionate concern for others.

The role of the military. Whatever the new political solution and arrangement the country ends up with, and however 'sound' these are, the threat of coups and further instability will not automatically disappear. There are two conditions necessary to eliminate, or at least significantly reduce such threats.

- Fiji needs to de-legitimise the idea that military force and insurrection are appropriate ways to achieve political goals. Coups do not occur where there is broad repugnance of the idea. To achieve this Fiji needs to strengthen respect for rule of law, to provide channels for the peaceful resolution of conflict and grievance, and ensure that all voices are heard. Fiji needs a government, judiciary, private sector and civil society that are inclusive, responsive and effective.
- The need to demilitarise state and society and to remove the means for carrying out such acts. It is important that the military acts to protect the institutions of the state against coups and armed insurrection; that it remains apolitical and subject to civilian and constitutional rule; and that it serves the whole nation and not just certain elements of the nation. Fiji must ensure against the spread of armed groups within the country, and the illegal transfer of



weapons. But Fiji also needs to de-glamorise the military and especially renegade military figures, to ensure that they do not become role models for its disaffected youth.

The need to listen. In his address prior to the presentation of the Mini-Budget, the interim Prime Minister stressed the need for his interim administration to listen carefully to the people. This was a wise observation and needs to be followed through with enthusiasm. Not only should the elite and business people be listened to but the voices of the workers, the poor, the Unions, Women's groups, Churches and NGOs need to be heard to provide a balance and give a different perspective. The sad assessment of Epeli Hau'ofa is relevant here: "It is the privileged who decide on the needs of their communities and the directions of development and whose rising aspirations and affluence entail the worsening condition of the poor."

The Government needs to acknowledge the important role of civil society including the Churches. On such issues as diverse as the formulation of the national budget, the revision of ALTA, remodelling the NLTB, a just national wage, privatisation, and reconciliation, the government would do well to listen and give heed to the many voices of groups from civil society if balanced and informed decisions are to be made for the good of all.

At the same time, the many NGO groups in civil society and the Churches should see themselves as having a special responsibility at this time in Fiji's history. They should take initiative and suggest new possibilities, monitor government policies (particularly where they affect the poor and marginalised), do research in areas of obvious need, and challenge the interim administration about priorities and concerns. Economic recovery is a central issue for Fiji at this time but civil society must continually stress that the economy is for people and that economic growth must go hand in hand with equitable distribution of wealth.

Fourth, the need for a just and sustainable vision

There is a need to articulate a vision of a just society with which all can feel secure in the future. Having heeded the lessons of recent and past events, Fiji should consider how social and political structures and future relationships might be different, more equitable, more just and more satisfying.

The search for a political solution is closely related to the whole process of reconciliation. This, in turn would provide political stability and be a necessary pre-condition for investor confidence and much needed economic recovery. But what are the ingredients of a sound political arrangement in the Fiji context? In 1997 Fiji thought it had found the right ingredients and in fact the former Prime Minister, Sitiveni Rabuka, listed what he believed these were. The 1997 constitution, he said:

- * Provided adequate safeguards to protect ethnic Fijian interests;
- * It was acceptable to all people of Fiji and would bring everyone together as one country and one people;
- * It would provide an enduring basis for all communities to be able to live alongside each other peacefully and harmoniously;
- * It would create an environment which would encourage greater investment in Fiji's economy and promote sustained economic growth; and,
- * It would enable Fiji to renew its links with the British Crown and regain its membership of the Commonwealth, and make it easier for Fiji to protect its economic interests through international arrangements like the Lome Convention.

An important question that will be crucial for a just and sound solution to the political crisis is how to keep an acceptable balance between universal democratic rights and indigenous rights. The other crucial question is whether Fiji begins this search from the premise that the two are compatible and go hand in hand, or from the assumption that there needs to be a trade-off.



One of the fundamental problems Fiji faces is how to ensure that any political arrangement it comes up with will last longer than the next election. Rabuka's abrogation of the 1970 constitution in 1987 and Military's abrogation of the 1997 constitution in 2000 have set precedents to show how easily constitutions can be swept aside. Constitutions are not something that should be set in stone, but neither should they be written in pencil, to be erased and amended at will. They need to have some degree of permanency. A start would be to penalise Speight and his group – not to allow their immunity. A legal way must be found to foil the attempts of any possible coup leader in the future from interfering with the country's constitution.

General Conclusion: A time for Despair or a Time for Hope

In concluding this analysis, there is no need to re-emphasise the factors that contributed to the current crisis. Nonetheless, these historical factors are important in as far as they become learning mechanisms for rebuilding ethnic relationships, addressing social justice issues and reconciliation. This paper has tried to analyse the various factors that contributed to the May 2000 coup and the ensuing political crisis in Fiji. It is not meant to be a purely academic exercise. Rather it is motivated by the need to reconstruct the future based on hope and the lessons drawn from recent and past events. The Chinese character for 'crisis' is composed of two characters meaning 'danger' and 'opportunity' reminding us that out of a time of crisis new opportunities can arise.

In the Christian tradition, God is always talking about a new song, a new city, a new heart, a new spirit, a new time and a new hope. Usually these phrases come after a time of discouragement and defeat. After the first coups of 1987 an atmosphere of hopelessness and fear gripped this nation. Yet out of the ashes of despair and despondency, new hope and life began to emerge. Out of the atmosphere of racial mistrust and fear, Fijians and Indo-Fijians came together determined to build bridges of racial and religious understanding.

Interfaith Search Fiji grew and blossomed as an organisation, which brought together the various religious traditions of Fiji. The Citizens' Constitutional Forum (CCF) grew out of a felt need for people of different political and racial backgrounds to come together and discuss

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a common basis on which the future development of Fiji could be built. The Fiji Forum for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation also emerge after the coups of 1987 to address issues of injustice and poverty and to confront the Interim and elected government with an alternative vision

of development which was people friendly. The FCC Research Group was also founded at this time to evaluate current issues through Christian eyes and to propose new possibilities. Many other groups at the more grass-roots levels also sprang to life and dreamt of new visions for the future. The Unions, Women's organisations, Youth groups and academics – were all stirred to new life and new hope. Despite the much-publicised incidents of racial hatred and arrogant defiance of law and order we are now witnessing a time of restoration and greater stability.

Since mid-May 2000, the Fiji National Council of Women (FNCW) co-ordinated and facilitated the sharing of experiences and stories of people regarding the coup and its impact on them. The enabling environment it created gave much hope and faith, and sustained people's vision and belief in human goodness and truth. They exposed the myth of ethnic hatred and violence by standing together as a multi-ethnic group. Their solidarity in holding the shattered dreams of many people and keeping the country from totally falling apart during the crisis led one correspondent to say: "Perhaps it is the women we should look to for the future of this country."¹ Young Adults with Concerns (YAwC) conducted a Peace, Hope, and Reconciliation campaign. They rally around the candle and the delivery of it around the main business district, including the Churches' offices.



Stories of inter-racial concern and real love are beginning to emerge. An Indo-Fijian taxi driver spoke of his happiness to see that the indigenous Fijian dominated military were bringing peace to everyone and making him feel that Fiji could still be his home. Indigenous Fijian villages at Dawasamu sheltered Indo-Fijian families. It will be a long hard road. Despite those who plan to migrate, many still stay and build again for a more secure future. Fiji is a country that is used to re-building. Cyclones destroy

*Fiji is a country that is used to re-building.
Cyclones destroy the work of years in
a few minutes but people survive and
rebuild*

the work of years in a few minutes but people survive and rebuild. New growth miraculously appears and life goes on. We are strengthened by times of crisis to dry our tears and rebuild with hope for the future. This time Fiji must learn from the past and build itself on a solid foundation that will promise hope and security for all.

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Representing “The Text” in Pacific Bible Translations



Holger Szesnat

Introduction¹

The aim of this essay is to take a look at the way in which Pacific Bible translations represent the nature of the Biblical text. By ‘nature’ I mean (in this context) the text’s historical origins, which leads us to a consideration of textual criticism and, to some extent, canon formation. To keep this topic within workable limits, considering the nature of a journal article, I will concentrate on the text and canon of the Second Testament only. In spite of certain important similarities, there are quite fundamental differences between First and Second Testament textual criticism (let alone the problem of the canon of the First Testament, which is even more complex). Discussing both would unduly confuse matters in a short article such as this.² Yet I believe that the basic conclusions drawn from my discussion of the Second Testament are also valid for the First Testament.

As an aside, I should note here my preference for the terminology of ‘Second Testament’ instead of ‘New Testament’, and ‘First Testament’ instead of ‘Old Testament’, a terminological change due to progress in the Jewish-Christian dialogue.³ All of these terms have their peculiar problems, of course. To avoid confusion among readers who may not be familiar with these terms,

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I will occasionally still use ‘New / Old Testament’.⁴

Textual criticism is not usually high on the agenda of exegetical methodology classes, wherever they may take place. This is beginning to be reflected in textbooks on exegetical methods, some of which do not have a chapter on textual criticism any longer.⁵ There seems to be an unspoken assumption among many that the text of the Bible itself is somehow not a theological and exegetical issue (anymore?), and that textual criticism therefore need not clutter our courses already brimful with a multitude of methods of biblical exegesis, from standard historical-critical to newer methods like narrative or social-science criticism, let alone various kinds of ‘contextual exegesis’.⁶ I hope that readers of this essay who persevere to the end will realise how problematic such an assumption is.

Most students who obtain a degree and even postgraduate qualifications in theology today are quite ignorant of textual criticism and canon history. Indeed, such lack of quite basic knowledge seems commonplace on a global scale; at least this is suggested by anecdotal evidence from other continents. For example, the North American textual critic Bart Ehrman complained in 1997 that doctoral candidates in the graduate schools of that continent hardly know how to work with the textual apparatus of the standard critical edition of the text of the Second Testament, known as ‘Nestle-Aland’.⁷ This appalling state of affairs, however, should hardly makes us feel complacent in the Pacific.

Of course, there are quite a few ‘good’ reasons for this widespread neglect of textual criticism, however exasperating the resulting ignorance among further generations of trained theologians may be. There is the simple fact that the printed text offered in both standard editions of the Greek New Testament has basically not changed since 1979.⁸ Perhaps most importantly, anyone who has laboured through the standard works on textual criticism will readily agree that this is a ‘dry’ matter (certainly to begin with). It is also true that textual criticism has become particularly prone to a high level of specialisation on the part of scholars. Indeed, textual criticism is often seen as a bit of an ‘esoteric’ subject within the



discipline of Second Testament Studies.

Yet what is frequently ignored in all this is that *all* Bible readers rely on the results of textual criticism, as I will demonstrate below. I contend in this essay that the lack of interest shown in textual criticism has a dangerous theological side effect. This is perhaps most serious for the ordinary Bible reader for she cannot even get advice from the average theologically trained pastor. While textual criticism may be regarded as an esoteric discipline, the ordinary person can see its results, or at least the tip of the iceberg, in Bible translations available today.

In the following, I wish to explore the extent to which Pacific Bible translations indicate to their readers something about the state of the text of the New Testament. To make this task manageable, I need to restrict myself to a small sample of Pacific Bible translations drawn from the plethora of those available in print. Before I can begin this discussion, though, it would seem opportune to provide a brief introduction to the problem of Second Testament textual criticism and the formation of the canon. This will of necessity be very brief, sometimes simplifying matters, and yet perhaps confusing to those who have never heard of it. I must refer to the standard works on textual criticism in this respect.⁹ To save space, I will also make use of a number of common abbreviations listed in the endnotes.¹⁰

Textual Criticism and the History of the New Testament

Everyone who reads or listens to the Second Testament benefits from the results of textual criticism, for it can be argued that without textual criticism, there would be no Second Testament (certainly no printed one). Put differently, whatever copy of a Bible translation we may hold in our hands today, it is always the result of textual criticism in some form. Or, to put it in yet another way, of all the methods of interpretation, textual criticism cannot be rejected out of hand for ideological reasons: even if it is ignored, if only out of sheer ignorance,

every Bible reader still depends on the results of textual criticism.

How can I make such a claim? To answer that question, we need to look at the historical origins of the New Testament text. Put simply, the New Testament consists of 27 distinct writings: from Matthew up to Revelation.¹¹ Each of these was originally written separately; there is no evidence that the authors themselves envisaged a collection of these writings (leaving aside for the moment the connection between the Gospel according to Luke and the Acts of the Apostles).¹² The material on which these ‘books’ were written was not very durable, especially in the climatic conditions of the Mediterranean. As a result, they had to be copied by hand, not only to distribute them to other communities of Christians, but also to preserve them. The writings we call the New (Second) Testament were copied over and over again until the printing press developed in Europe some fourteen hundred years later. But the ancient Greek manuscripts (mss)¹³ used to construct the text of the Second Testament which we find in our convenient printed Greek Testament copies today exhibit one common feature: not a single one of them is exactly like another. Every single one of these more than 5.000 New Testament mss (or fragments thereof) differs from each other.

The vast majority of these differences are of course due to simple mistakes, or changes in orthography, and so on. Such differences are perfectly natural considering the long history of copying these manuscripts by hand, and it is relatively easy for the experienced textual critic to identify such ‘unintentional changes’ to the text. Far more difficult and fundamentally theologically challenging are what textual critics refer to as ‘intentional changes’; we will return to them a little later. For now, a few more words have to be said about the process of forming the canon of the New Testament.

The collection of works that is now commonly referred to as the New (Second) Testament only came about after a long and complex process of canon formation. This canon formation was both community-consensus driven and a contested process. It was driven by community



consensus because decisions about the canonical status of particular writings tended to take place in recognition of what was effectively already *fait accompli* in different communities (churches). However, the process of canon formation was also sometimes a contested matter: beginning with Marcion, canon formation was at times spurred on by controversies within the church, which compelled sectors of the church to re-examine the early Christian writings they regarded as valid.¹⁴ Also, different regions developed somewhat different canons, and it took time to harmonise these. The process of developing a Second Testament canon of sacred scripture (ie a canon in addition to the First Testament, usually used by the church in the form of the ancient Greek translation known as the Septuagint, LXX), slowly came to its first conclusion during the fourth and fifth century.¹⁵

Before I move on, though, it is perhaps useful to recall the old distinction between ‘scripture’ and ‘canon’.¹⁶ For we are perhaps so used to conceptualising the two in such close proximity, such close connection, that they tend to be read as virtually one: when we talk of ‘Scripture’, we tend to identify this

with the canon of revered writings known as the Bible. Yet ‘scripture’ and ‘canon’

A ‘canon’ in a religious context is a body of literature regarded as ‘scripture’; such canons have a tendency to be seen as ‘closed’

are really distinct concepts which in other periods of the history of Christianity have not been so closely related. In general, ‘scripture’ can be roughly defined as literature that is regarded as religiously significant, or authoritative.¹⁷ A ‘canon’ in a religious context is a body of literature regarded as ‘scripture’; such canons have a tendency to be seen as ‘closed’. Hence, while a canon implies scripture, this is not the case vice versa. Neither Judaism nor Christianity had a canon proper in the first century, but they certainly had writings regarded as scripture.

For first-century Christians, to put it very simply, ‘Scripture’ was roughly what is now called the First (Old) Testament. This is quite clear in the writings of the Second Testament themselves: when Matthew or Paul say “it is written”, they refer to writings in what Christians now call the

First (Old) Testament. There is no doubt that other ‘witnesses’ were crucial in the life of the early church at the same time, especially oral tradition (such as the ‘words of the Lord’, as is evidenced for instance in the letters of Paul; eg. 1 Cor 7:10-16, 7:25, 9:14). It seems that already during the second century, most Christian communities regarded certain Christian writings (such as the letters of Paul, or certain gospels) as comparable to that Scripture (ie most of the LXX): they cited them reverently in their own letters and books, and read portions from them in their worship. However, it was not until the end of the fourth century that the church on the whole agreed on the precise content of the ‘Second Testament’, and even then there were exceptions in some geographical areas, or with regard to certain Second Testament writings (eg. Revelation; Hebrews). After all, there were many other early Christian writings than we now have in the Second Testament: there were other gospels and related writings (eg the Gospel according to Thomas; or Tatian’s *Diatessaron*); there were other letters (eg. the Epistles of Clement; or Paul’s supposed Third Letter to the Corinthians), and yet other works in circulation for many centuries (eg. the Shepherd of Hermas; Didache). Many of these writings were, at different times and in different places, accorded the same or similar status (as revered scriptures) as the writings we now find in our printed copies of the Second Testament. It is no accident that some of these writings found their place in some of the oldest and most reliable New Testament mss we still have today, such as codex Vaticanus (4th century).¹⁸

The notion of scripture as inviolate, which is today so easily assumed in the church, must not be presupposed in the same way for the first few generations of Christians. Certainly, some early Christian writings were revered already in the first two centuries after Jesus’ death – that was, after all, a major reason for preserving them. But exactly *when* and *how* the early Christian believers then began to ascribe to these particular Christian writings the same sacred status as they did to the writings we call the First Testament, is not entirely clear. Actually, even the precise function of the First Testament in the theology and practice of the early church is rather complicated.¹⁹ Canon formation and the theological development of a sense of scripture appears to have been



a long and very complex process. In some ways, the canon only came to a close at a very late stage in the history of the church. For instance, the question of what scriptures ought to be considered canonical was a matter of discussion again at the time of the Reformation. In some ways, the question persists today, as Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Orthodox church traditions use different forms of the canon.

The theological conception of textual inviolability also changed with the emergence of relatively cheap, *printed* Bibles from the 16th century onward. For the first time in history, the Biblical text was now available in comparatively large quantities, in exactly the same shape and form. One and the same text form could now be reproduced thousands of times *without any change whatsoever* – quite in contrast to mss copied by hand, where this was practically impossible. This revolutionary technological development arguably changed the way in which Scripture and its ‘authority’ was perceived:²⁰ clearly, technology / material life had a serious effect on the development of faith and belief, both popular and academic.

In the case of the *Greek* Testament, this belief in the inviolability of the text developed particularly in respect of the first printed Greek text edited (one might say: created) by Erasmus of Rotterdam in the early 16th century. Erasmus had published his printed Greek text on the basis of a few medieval manuscripts. Eventually called the *textus receptus* (the ‘received text’; hereafter: TR) by the publishers, this 16th / 17th century attempt at presenting a printed text of the Greek Testament soon achieved total dominance in most Protestant churches of Europe over a period of more than 300 years.²¹ It is essentially this text form which was used in the famous AV / KJV of 1611,²² and in turn this strongly influenced so-called ‘Third World’ translations.²³ For example, the influential British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS) only changed its policy in respect of prescribing the TR basis for new Bible translations in 1904.²⁴ The fundamental problem of the TR is that it is based on very late and (from a modern text-critical point of view) quite unreliable manuscripts. As a result, modern translations of the New Testament have not only thousands of subtle differences with the Greek textual

basis of the AV / KJV, barely noticeable to the reader of a translation, but also many very obvious ones which have an immediate effect on any translation (see, for instance, Acts 8:37; Mk 16:9-20; Jn 7:53 - 8:11).²⁵

Finally, we have to return for a moment to the history of the Second Testament writings in the first few centuries. The fact that the writings of the Second Testament did not immediately acquire the same status as the ‘First Testament’ had at least one significant implication: it allowed the Christian scribes who copied the Second Testament a certain degree of freedom in making deliberate changes to the text. For in addition to the great number of inadvertent, accidental errors which crept into the process of copying the early Christian witnesses by hand, there is a large number of deliberate alterations of the text of the Second Testament. Most of these deliberate alterations occurred very early in the history of transmission, in the first 200 to 300 years.²⁶ Such deliberate changes ranged from relatively ‘innocent’ attempts to harmonize the gospels, to deliberate alterations to the text to suit the theological views of the scribe and his or her community.²⁷ Such deliberate changes due to theological reasons were not just undertaken by those declared heretical, but especially by early Christian scribes who wrote in the service of the emerging ‘orthodox’ (‘mainline’) church and its theologians.²⁸

A good deal of the freedom that scribes felt in relation to the text seems to derive from this unsettled status of the New Testament. One should not regard this as unfaithfulness on the part of these Christian scribes: they were not bound by our own dogmatic strictures but theirs, or rather, their concerns were their own dogmatic and social struggles. In the end, what mattered most in the early church was the risen Christ, the presence of the Holy Spirit in their midst. In a way, the precise ‘letters’ of the early Christian writings we call the Second (New) Testament were of secondary importance to them. This was coupled with a generally ambiguous attitude in Mediterranean antiquity to the written word and its reliability as opposed to the word spoken in true spirit.²⁹ In a society in which the literacy rate was as low as 5-10%,³⁰ manual copying notorious for its unreliability, and indeed pseudoeigraphy a common phenomenon, such suspicion is hardly surprising.



The task of textual criticism, then, to bring this section to a close, is to do two things: firstly, by studying the data available from all extant mss, to establish the oldest form of the text; and secondly, to explain variations to the text which occurred during the long manual copying process. Most results of this fundamental task of textual criticism are not immediately obvious even to the attentive reader of a modern translation because they are only apparent at the level of the Greek text. However, the most obvious results of textual criticism are clear in any modern Bible translation, especially in comparison with the text of the AV / KJV. A glance at common modern translations into English is sufficient to show the most obvious features: the alert reader will notice that there are a number of cases where the translated text appears to have verses (or parts) mysteriously ‘missing’. Such a reader may distinguish at least four separate types of problems:³¹

- (1) large blocks of texts that appear to be in doubt, or ‘disappear’ from the text printed, such as Mk 16:9-20 (the different endings of Mark) or Jn 7:53 - 8:11 (known as the *pericope adulterae*);
- (2) texts which are supposedly important for theological reasons, such as 1 Jn 5:7-8 (the so-called *comma Johanneum*)
- (3) texts that involve supernatural events or miracles, such as Jn 5:4;
- (4) texts which are of ritual significance in the church, such as Lk 22:19b-20.

Most modern textual critics agree that in all likelihood these text portions were not part of the oldest form of the text (with the exception of the last example, which is disputed).³² In recognition of this, modern translations in major European languages deal with this in a variety of ways. Most translations tend to place footnotes or other text-critical indicators near the verse(s) in question, usually with some sort of explanation, however opaque, as to why they did that.³³

An Analysis of some Pacific Bible Translations³⁴

In this section I am interested in the way in which certain Pacific Bible translations represent the results of New Testament textual criticism. For the ordinary reader, this is typically only apparent in two aspects of a published translation: firstly, the foreword, preface, or introductory material, and secondly, text-critical indications in the translated text itself (usually in the form of footnotes). For the purpose of this article, only a limited number of translations could be discussed, although I have analysed a much larger number.³⁵ However, considering the uniformity of the basic results and the strikingly similar state of affairs in translations into other languages,³⁶ I suggest that the evidence below is strongly indicative for the whole range of Pacific Island Bible translations. I should like to stress that I have selected the translations discussed below not because they are particularly ‘good’ or ‘bad’ but rather because they seem to me to be representative of certain trends evidenced by a much larger number of Bible translations.³⁷ If a particular translation is characterised as problematic from the point of view of its representation of textual criticism, this is to be seen as merely one example among many others.

Translations of the Second Testament into the languages of the Pacific, though numbering still few in the first half of the 19th century, were well under way and quite numerous already during the second half.³⁸ Such older translations of the Second Testament almost invariably used the *textus receptus* as its Greek text base, following established procedure laid down by the British and Foreign Bible Society. As one would expect, there is therefore no indication of a text-critical nature in such translations, neither in introductions nor in any kind of notes. This state of affairs appears to have continued well into the 1960’s.

More recent translation projects tend to follow prominent features of the Good News Bible / Today’s English Version, which, I understand, is encouraged by the UBS: from section headings and parallel text citations to maps and illustrations, the format of the GNB is basically



copied. In comparison with older Pacific translations, this also affects the text base, most obviously by (but by no means limited to) excluding certain verses printed in the TR, since the GNB essentially follows today's standard Greek text offered in the UBSGNT. This gives rise to the common problem of modern Bible translations: how does one indicate such text-critical decisions to the reader? How is one, for instance, to deal with the fact that the verse numbering sometimes seems to indicate that a verse has been 'skipped' (eg. Acts 8:37)?

By and large, recent translations of the Second Testament or the whole Bible in the numerous languages of the Pacific provide neither any introductory comments (certainly not on matters relating to the textual state of affairs), nor do they give any text-critical footnotes. In fact, in a few instances, the *textus receptus* was apparently still in use quite recently. A case in point is the 1975 edition of the Second Testament in Tahitian.³⁹ It has no introduction and no notes of any kind: texts like Mk 16:9-20, Jn 7:53 - 8:11 and 5:3b-4, Acts 8:37 and 1 Jn 5:7b etc. are translated and printed without any indication of their problematic textual status. Today, as in 1975, scholars almost unanimously recognise that these parts of the texts cannot be regarded as part of the 'original text' of the Second Testament but are later additions to the text made by the Christian scribes who copied the mss of the Bible for many centuries, until the invention of the printing press. As a result, the 1975 Tahitian New Testament represents one side of the spectrum of Pacific Bible translations in respect of their representation of the text: that side of the spectrum which is characterised by the absence of any text-critical indications, and in fact the reproduction of the *textus receptus* (ie. a text outdated by more than a century).⁴⁰

But let us move to the other side of the spectrum of Pacific Bible translations. Perhaps the most extensive number of text-critical indicators can be found in the 1968 revision of the 1930 New Testament translation into Rotuman.⁴¹ There is no introduction of any sort. However, a fairly large number of text-critical indicators occur in the printed text, all in the same format. Translated into English, these footnotes invariably state: "some books omit", or "some books have instead . . ." as for

instance in Acts 8:37, which is printed normally in the text, but with a footnote of this kind. This is particularly obvious in the case of the ending of Mark and the *pericope adulterae*, where the relevant texts are also spatially separated from the rest of the text by a larger paragraph gap. It is not clear what system is followed in the selection of text-critical problems though it is possible that the first edition of the UBSGNT influenced decisions already here: while the *textus receptus* is effectively reproduced, notes indicate the problematic status of some parts of the text.

Although this translation provides comparatively much information, it is extremely doubtful that a reader who is not trained in textual criticism would be able to understand the comments that are provided. As I said, there is no introduction, and the comments themselves are stereotypically phrased. The operative word used in the notes, *puk*, would be understood by a Rotuman speaker as a reference to ‘English books’, namely English translations. But just what is a reader to make of it, for instance, when she is told that ‘some English versions of the NT do not have the story of the suspected adulteress’? What is the reader to make of it when he notices the larger paragraph gaps in the case of Mk 16:9-20 and Jn 7:53 - 8:11?

A similar type of translation from this point of view is the 1969 revision of the Samoan translation of the NT.⁴² Again, there is no introduction reflecting on the textual state of affairs. However, footnotes are employed in some cases, namely where verses are apparently ‘left out’ of the text (such as Jn 5:3b-4, 7:53-8:11; Acts 8:37, or Rom 16:24). An exception is the end of Mk, where vv. 9-20 are printed normally. There is no footnote but only a significant space between vv. 8 and 9; no such space occurs in any other place.⁴³ In contrast to the Rotuman translation, the text offered in the main body of print no longer follows the TR.

Where text-critical footnotes are printed in the Samoan translation, they read virtually the same in all instances. For example, in the case of Mt 17:21, an English translation of the footnote would read as follows: “This is found in other copies of this book in the Greek language, that



is, verse 21 . . ." (and this is then followed by a translation of that particular verse). A significant problem here is that the construction involving the word here translated as 'copy' (*ata*), appears to be quite ambiguous. Milner's Samoan-English dictionary indicates quite a range of meanings for this word, from 'shadow' to 'reflection', or 'copy / duplicate' to 'film' and 'photograph'.⁴⁴ I asked three Samoan graduate theology students separately to explain these footnotes to me. In each case, it took at least ten minutes before the student was able to make any sense of this, and then only because I offered a short crash course in textual criticism. Again, how is the ordinary reader supposed to understand all this?

More recent Pacific Bible translations tend to offer a Biblical text along similar lines, providing very little information for the reader. In some cases, however, they offer absolutely no text-critical comments or indicators of any kind, and in some instances they seem to return once more, at least in part, to the *textus receptus* Greek text base. One example of such an approach is the 1987 revision of the New Testament in Fijian,⁴⁵ which was apparently translated on the basis of the GNB / TEV.⁴⁶ There is no introduction of any kind; there are no notes of any sort. *Square* brackets are used for a limited number of texts of dubious textual nature (such as Mk 16:9-20). To make matters even more confusing, *round* brackets are used in other places — but as a syntactic aid (eg Mt 24:15, 27:33).

The selection of texts placed in square brackets may be partially based on the UBSGNT, where such problematic texts are either removed from the body of the text or placed in single or double square brackets. Yet in other places, such as Acts 8:37, which the UBSGNT / Nestle-Aland text offers only in the footnotes, the dubious verses are moved back into the text, albeit in square brackets. (By comparison, the GNB / TEV does not print this text in the body of the text but only in a footnote.) Once more, no comments or notes of any kind are offered in the Fijian NT to explain the text or the double brackets. Surprisingly enough, in yet other cases of text-critical changes since the days of the *textus receptus* and the AV / KJV, such as 1 Jn 5:7-8 (the *Comma Johanneum*),

the 1987 Fijian NT revision does *not* print the extended text of the *textus receptus* just like the GNB / TEV does not (in contrast to the previous Fijian NT version of 1901, which *does* print the long text).⁴⁷ Just what system was used (if any) to decide which text to translate and print remains unclear. In fact, what kind of text the publishers thought they are presenting is a mystery.

Much of this (with the exception of the strange choice of what text to print) appears to be in line with the GNB ‘short version’ without notes. The GNB short version, however, at least states in the foreword that verses enclosed in square brackets “are not found in the oldest and best manuscripts of the New Testament”. The Fijian NT does nothing of the sort. No explanation of any kind is given for these square brackets. Inevitably, some attentive readers will wonder what those brackets are there for. Perhaps they are printing errors? Or are they perhaps simply brackets like the round brackets – indicating somewhat independent text segments which do not quite fit into the structure of the sentence?

In sum, the representation of the results of textual criticism in Pacific Bible translations is, right across the spectrum, woefully inadequate. Of course, this is not surprising, since for instance English translations do not do much better,⁴⁸ and the same case could be made for French or German translations that this author is familiar with. Leaving aside those translations which are still essentially of 19th century provenance, one could say without exaggeration that what Pacific Bible translations offer their readers in respect of textual criticism and the textual state of affairs is, at best, a ‘watered-down’ version of major European language translations which are already quite problematic (eg. the 1968 Rotuman or the 1969 Samoan translation); at worst, it is simply lack of information, coupled with a strange choice of text to print, which can only be interpreted as a text produced by translators who do not understand textual criticism at all (eg. the 1987 Fijian NT).

Some Reflections on Publishing Bible Translations

Of course, there are a number of issues involved in Bible translations which have a bearing on the perceived usefulness of having text-critical indicators in published Bible translations. For instance, contemporary translation projects in the Pacific and elsewhere frequently have to deal with the fact that they are producing a text for a largely oral culture. Producing a translation in such a context is a challenge in itself.⁴⁹ But how does one represent textual criticism in such a translation? What effect does it have in such a context, for example, that a Bible translation tries to indicate why certain verses are printed or not? How is this going to be received in a primarily oral society? Perhaps more difficult is the question: at what point do we stop doing this? Should a revised translation into Samoan, Pohnpeian, or Fijian, be permanently based on the assumption of an oral culture as if such cultures remained constant, without change, at all times? Finally, what are the theological consequences of raising (or *not* raising) these questions in precisely this context?

There is also the difficult task of choosing an adequate way of offering information on text-critical results. The standard option in major English translations is to print an introduction, and to provide text-critical footnotes. Yet who reads such introductions and footnotes? Perhaps too little research has been done on *how ordinary readers in different cultural contexts* actually read the Bible, and also *what* they read – and do *not* read. The fact that many trained and ordained ministers never seem to have asked themselves the question what these strange text-critical footnotes in (English and other) Bible translations mean should warn us about the adequacy of such a standard approach to communicating text-critical results. In addition, perhaps it should also warn us about the quality of theological education.

A related issue is the problem as to what kind of text-critical problems to mention from the thousands of variations that exist: how does one select the appropriate kind of textual problem to discuss? Sometimes one gets the impression that modern Bible translations are mostly guided

by differences with the older, TR / AV text form: put simply, whenever a verse appears to be ‘missing’ in comparison with the TR / AV, this is indicated. Should the same principle be used in Pacific Bible translations when revisions are done these days? For instance, on what basis ought the Fijian revision of the New Testament to have selected text-critical indicators? In relation to common English translations? In relation to the earlier Fijian translation of 1901?

There are also other, often quite mundane aspects of Bible translation publication which are of concern, such as financial matters: every page added for comments of this kind will increase the costs. In a context of cash-strapped people, churches and Bible Societies, taking the text of the Bible seriously in this sense may be seen as too costly. But perhaps all it needs is some creativity in finding solutions that do not increase the page numbers unduly; in an age of increasing printing ease and sophistication on the basis of easy-to-learn desktop publishing software, this should not be a serious concern any longer.

What is important here, and indeed deeply troubling, is that English translations (and for that matter, French as well) available and in use in the Pacific are hardly better in their representation of textual criticism. Even in ‘high end’ translations such as the NRSV or REB (which were *not* written in ‘simple English’ which can be understood at primary school level), the ordinary reader is left very much in the dark as far as the state of the NT text is concerned. In these English translations, the text selected for printing may be more in line with the current state of the (text-critical) art, and the footnotes more consistent, but the text-critical indicators are usually quite appallingly inadequate from the point of view of the ordinary reader.⁵⁰ For the Bible reader in the Pacific, this means effectively that even consulting a French or English Bible translation in addition to the local language Bible is of little use: the ordinary reader who wants to find out what these odd square brackets or mysterious footnotes actually mean, or why certain verses are printed in some Bible translations and not in others, is still left without any help, for neither any available translations nor the theologically trained pastors are equipped or trained to be of much help in this respect.



Some Theological Considerations

I shall never forget an incident some years ago when teaching a class on a rural South African university campus. After going through the usual historical-critical methods (as the first part of an exegetical method course), we reviewed what we had done so far and discussed problematic issues. The very first problem that came up was textual criticism: a theology student insisted that he “did not like it” because it made him “doubt the Bible”. I was a little startled: I had expected, and previously encountered, that very response in respect of form criticism, or some of the other historical methods, but never in connection with textual criticism. I was surprised because textual criticism is so basic to the kind of exegesis I had been taught myself (“you have to have a text before you can interpret it!”) that the thought that this might constitute a faith problem simply never occurred to me (and neither would I have thought of writing an essay like this!).

It was only in reflecting on both the student’s and my own reaction that the first ideas for this paper

arose. For in the end, I realised *certain types of theology are indeed deeply challenged by textual criticism*
that my student was quite correct – certain types of

theology are indeed deeply challenged by textual criticism. However, I should like to think that it would be preferable if that sense of anxiety were to be channelled and utilised rather than swept under the carpet. Lack of theological education in this area, as well as inadequate Bible translations, are not the answer.

Textual critics have developed at least two ‘standard’ arguments to deal with the kind of worried question that my student asked. I contend that these standard arguments are inadequate and, certainly today, in some ways inappropriately focussed.

1. Today, so the first argument goes, scholars have access to more than 5.000 ancient Greek mss containing the Second Testament or parts thereof, not to mention ancient versions (old translations into Latin, Syriac, Coptic,

and so on) and the scriptural quotations of the church fathers. All of these help the textual critic in the task of reconstructing the oldest form of the text of the Second Testament. While the majority of these mss is of late, medieval origin, many are much older, some dating back to the second to fifth century. There are virtually complete New Testament copies in our possession today which are as old as the fourth century. In contrast, for certain important ancient writings like some of Tacitus (Roman historian) or Plato (Greek philosopher), we have only a handful of very late medieval mss. In this sense, so the standard argument claims, we are at an incomparable advantage to any other ancient document or set of documents (save perhaps the Hebrew Bible) in respect of the mass of data at our disposal.⁵¹

While the ‘facts’ of this argument are not incorrect in themselves, it is problematic because it ignores or plays down *other* aspects of the New Testament text. In particular, it fails to take seriously the fact that the earliest mss we have access to are several stages of copying removed from the originals (the *autographs*). Textual critics might try and develop arguments to show that some of these 2nd to 5th century mss must have been based on very early mss, perhaps even the autographs, but these are once more typical historical arguments based on probability – and therefore very much open to debate. For as I pointed out above, it is precisely this earliest phase of copying the text of the NT that is seen by many textual critics as the most ‘free’ in the sense that the Christian scribes were not bound by (our) dogmatic considerations to copy the text *exactly* as they found it in the manuscript they were copying. It is precisely in this early phase of copying that most of the serious deliberate changes to the text occurred.⁵² Hence the large number of relatively old mss is not as great a text-critical advantage as it was once thought.

In fact, it is for this (and other) reasons that some NT textual critics today find it increasingly difficult to speak of the task of textual criticism as one of reconstructing the ‘original text’.⁵³ Rather, what textual critics can hope to recover, given the state of our data, is the *oldest* form(s) of the text. Given the data at our disposal, this means in practice that it is



difficult to re-construct a text older than the second or third century. Furthermore, recent scholarship is increasingly asking whether there really was a single ‘original text’ for each of the ‘books’ of the New Testament. In the case of Paul’s letters, for example, if David Trobisch’s provocative thesis mentioned earlier is correct, Paul himself edited the first collection of his letters, adapting their ‘original wording’ to the needs of the collection.⁵⁴ This raises a number of questions, such as: which form of the text of, say, Romans, ought one consider as Scripture today? A reconstructed ‘original’ letter of Paul to the Romans? Or the version of ‘Romans’ as edited (perhaps by Paul himself) for the earliest collection of Pauline letters which was later included in the Second Testament?

The Gospel according to Mark and especially the Acts of the Apostles are perhaps better known cases where it is probably not possible anymore to speak of a single ‘original text’ since different ‘editions’ of these writings have gone into the making of the canonical text as we have it in the mss available today. In the case of Acts, for instance, there are two distinct types of text apparent in the manuscript tradition, commonly referred to as the Western and the Alexandrian text form of Acts. The former is about 8% longer than the latter.⁵⁵ Which one is ‘original’? Which one ought to be considered ‘canonical’ today? There are no clear-cut answers to these questions anymore.⁵⁶ David Parker pointedly speaks about the gospels as a ‘living text’ which the early church developed and lived with, since text *preservation* was invariably coupled with *interpretation*.⁵⁷

2. It is routinely asserted that no text-critical variations affect doctrine; in that sense, Christian faith is not undermined by textual criticism. Hence, say, an Anglican like myself, may continue to assert with the Thirty-Nine Articles that *sacra scriptura continet omnia quae ad salutem sunt necessaria* (“Holy Scripture contains all [things] necessary to salvation”), and that these ‘things’ are not threatened by the textual state of affairs.⁵⁸

The basic problem with this sort of argument is that it depends quite heavily on certain *a priori* dogmatic considerations. It is true, of course, that very few text-critical problems concern passages usually used to base central doctrines on:⁵⁹ there are indeed no textual variations which

imply that the resurrection did not happen, or such like. But that is only one aspect of the problem. There are at least two lines of thought that fundamentally challenge the standard argument.

Firstly, there *are* a few instances where text-critical findings do not perhaps deny certain doctrines, but at least challenge the exclusive claims of

Firstly, there are a few instances where text-critical findings do not perhaps deny certain doctrines, but at least challenge the exclusive claims of orthodox doctrine

orthodox doctrine. For instance, picking up on the observation that Luke-Acts never describes the death of Jesus “for our sins” (ie as atonement for human transgression) except in the ‘words of institution’ in Lk 22:19-21,⁶⁰ Ehrman has argued very

persuasively on text-critical grounds that even this passage, which most scholars read as part of Luke, ought not to be read as part of the Lukan Gospel but as a later scribal addition. Effectively, this implies that Luke-Acts simply does not say anything about the death of Jesus *as atonement for human sins*. In fact, Ehrman and others take the argument further and suggest that this is quite deliberate on the side of the author of Luke-Acts.⁶¹ The consequences of such a view are quite obvious: there is at least one NT witness which does not stress the common expiatory view of Jesus’s death. Perhaps, then, this allows us more theological space to return to the discussion concerning the meaning of Jesus’ death, which has been problematic in modern theology for some time.

Secondly, the claim that ‘faith’ is not undermined by textual criticism underestimates the reality of the student’s fears I mentioned above. It ignores the pervasive power of basic conservative theological doctrine – which is, let us face it, wide-spread. Taking textual criticism seriously constitutes a considerable problem for many Christians brought up on a standard diet of conservative evangelical, charismatic or fundamentalist doctrine. One of my systematic theology professors in Germany used to say that his first argument with fundamentalists who insist on the literal inerrancy of Scripture was to take out his Greek Testament, point



to the text-critical ‘apparatus’ listing the most common variations in the text of the Greek New Testament manuscripts, and ask: “so which of these texts / variations is inerrant?” This is a good point to make, though by itself, it will of course not convince any hardline fundamentalist (but then, what does?).

It is not at all impossible, of course, to deal with the issue of textual criticism within an evangelical or even fundamentalist frame of mind.⁶² In fact, there is something of a growth industry in textual criticism among conservative theologians, partially because it is generally recognised as academic, and yet does not necessarily involve other, potentially threatening historical-critical methods of interpreting scripture. The more radical theologians of such conservative persuasion argue for a return to the TR / AV text base.⁶³ Other conservatives stick to the methods at work behind the standard critical editions of the Greek text (UBSGNT / Nestle-Aland) which most modern translations are based on; their endeavour is a kind of search for the *ipsissima verba*: not of the words of Jesus, but of the autographs. When the doyen of 20th century Bible translation theory, Eugene Nida, made his final comment in his essay ‘The New Testament Greek Text in the Third World’, he may have been too optimistic:⁶⁴

Hopefully, the day is past when people will think that any translation or even any Greek text contains the *verba ipsissima* of the original autographs.

Both sides of the conservative debate develop complex theological arguments which try to explain that in spite of the possibility of confusion and indeed great difficulty of finding ‘the original text’, one can always rely on God and the Holy Spirit to guide things in the right direction (“surely the Holy Spirit would not allow something bad to happen to the divine word”). The trouble with the ‘Holy Spirit argument’ is that it explains everything, and therefore nothing: if one argues that the Holy Spirit “surely” would not allow confusion and abuse to take place, one very quickly gets on the slippery slope towards arguing for some sort of divine justice in the crusades, the Holocaust, Rwanda’s genocide, and so on. While superficially tempting as a simplistic

conclusion drawn from the ancient doctrine of God's omnipotence, it is a theologically obscene argument best left well behind in the dusty chambers of theological rhetoric.

To sum up, then: the theological implications of not showing the reader of modern Bible translations (including those produced in the Pacific) anything about the nature of the text, should not be underestimated. By withholding hints as to the nature and historical origins of the text, the publishers of Bible translations are effectively making a choice in favour of conservative Christian doctrine. Presumably that is what some Bible translation publishers wish to do, but then this should be made apparent. If Bible publishers do *not* wish to make such an overt theological choice (which essentially robs their readers of the chance to make informed theological choices themselves), they will have to take the nature of the text more seriously, and represent it accordingly. Quite simply, attempting to deal with textual criticism in Bible translations properly, responsibly, and in an informed manner, is a long overdue necessity to help 'level the playing field'.

Concluding Remarks

This essay is not the first call in the Pacific to take textual criticism seriously. Some years ago, for instance, a young MTh student at the Pacific Theological College wrote his thesis on the need for a new Samoan Bible translation, and in that regard also raised the issue of text-critical matters in such a new translation. I wonder whether he was heard.⁶⁵

Neither are text-critical decisions as radical as the REB editors' decision to place Jn 7:53 - 8:11 in an appendix all that new in the Pacific. According to Rickards, James E. Moulton did practically the same thing already in 1880 (!) by placing this pericope in a footnote to the text of the Tongan translation published by the Wesleyan Church of Tonga.⁶⁶ Moulton was influenced by the famous Greek text offered by Westcott & Hort in the late 19th century – a landmark in text-critical work, reflecting late 19th century academic efforts to overcome the dominance of the *textus receptus* in the church. Consequently, the BFBS refused to support Moulton's Tongan translation, because of its policy to base all translation



projects on the TR. Efforts such as Moulton's apparently remained in vain;⁶⁷ the pressure to conform was overwhelming and resulted in the present state of affairs. I have no doubt that this call to take textual criticism more seriously will not be the last call either. Old habits are hard to overcome, and so are many real and imagined obstacles on the way.

Nevertheless, where can we go from here? In principle, there are two choices: to carry on as before, or to take up the challenge. To carry on as before means effectively that we will continue to rely on the 'culture of silence' in the congregations.⁶⁸ No doubt this will be convenient as a means of ensuring that ministers of the church may continue to avoid questions their training has not enabled them to respond to. But will that work in (at least in some Pacific countries) increasingly better educated congregations? And is it ultimately truthful, and in accordance with the Gospel, to withhold basic information about the nature of the Bible from the faithful?

In practice, however, Bible translations themselves are perhaps not the best *first* step on the road to taking the nature and history of the Biblical text seriously: effective theological training is a prior requirement. For no matter how well future translation projects might be able to convey the state of the Biblical text (and this is admittedly a very difficult task!), it will raise questions in the congregations, and the trained leaders of the congregations need to be able to answer such questions. "A little learning is a dangerous thing", wrote Alexander Pope,⁶⁹ and this is certainly true for textual criticism and canon processes. As the example of the student I referred to earlier shows, simplistic thinking might result in abandoning *any* sort of authority to the Scriptures simply because of variations in the mss. Almost 300 years ago, Jonathan Swift, the satirical writer and Dean of St.Patrick's, Dublin, famous for his *Gulliver's Travels*, conjured up this very scenario with the striking image of a man who had heard of a text brought for proof of the Trinity, which in an ancient manuscript was differently read; he thereupon immediately took the hint, and by a sudden deduction . . . most logically concluded: "Why, if it is as you say, I may safely whore and drink on, and defy the parson."⁷⁰

Swift's biting satire notwithstanding, it can hardly be denied that lack of *proper* theological training might still quite easily lead to such half-baked thinking; hence good training at seminaries and colleges is vital. At the

..... *effective theological training is a prior requirement*

same time, teaching the basics of textual criticism and canon formation (even without Greek or Hebrew) may be used very profitably across a range of

disciplines: namely to instill critical skills of historical inquiry among students of the *Bible*; to discuss the *history* and theology of the early church; to raise the issue of the function and significance of Scripture in our *theological* endeavours; and ultimately also in discussing the ritual

..... *simplistic thinking might result in abandoning any sort of authority to the Scriptures simply because of variations in the mass ministry* of the church. Indeed, the question of the state of the Biblical text raises the problem of the status of Bible in theology. Some twenty years ago, Nida warned translators about

this issue: a simplistic theological notion of 'scripture' may easily lead to what amounts to a veneration of a particular translation and its text form, and in turn result in fierce resistance to any attempts, however well argued, to change such a translation in order to take account of 20th century textual research. But not only that, charges Nida:⁷¹

A further barrier to the acceptance of a more accurate Greek NT text resulted from the teaching of the Bible as 'the Word of God' in the sense of being essentially 'the words of God'.

Raising the issue of textual criticism and the process of canon formation inevitably leads us to a theological interrogation of what we really mean by 'scripture', and how it ought to function in our theology. While such a debate may be seen as threatening by some, it is ultimately healthy for the development of christian faith and reflection. Finally, if the mainline churches and their leadership are really serious about resisting the growth of fundamentalist (and charismatic) churches in the Pacific,⁷² such a task of theological discussion and education is vital. Fundamentalism



rests *inter alia* on a very narrow, limited, and exclusivist notion of what scripture is,⁷³ and as long as such views are widespread in mainline churches themselves, there is little reason for people not to switch allegiance to

essentially fundamentalist 'new churches' in the Pacific, especially if they offer a lively and attractive 'face' (for instance, in their worship).

..... if the mainlaine churches and their leadership are really serious about resisting the growth of fundamentalist (and charismatic) churches in the Pacific, such a task of theological discussion and education is vital

Those who may be alarmed by the more radical aspects of the views on the Second Testament text I expressed above (ie the discussion of the 'original text' question) need not be unduly concerned: one does not have to agree to those aspects in order to support this plea for text-critical awareness and information in Bible translations and theological education. Some of those who hold decidedly more moderate or even quite conservative views concerning the aims and results of textual criticism than I do agree that the connection between Bible translation and textual criticism ought to be made more apparent.⁷⁴ There is an increasing agreement today that textual criticism cannot be divorced from interpretation and indeed from theology; neither can we separate theological interpretation from translation.⁷⁵

It is true that, maybe more than any other method of interpretation, textual criticism will always remain a discipline for highly trained specialists: doing it properly demands the luxury of long years of training that few can afford. Serious language training in several ancient languages is merely the beginning. Yet the basics may be grasped without such highly specialised training, as long as care is taken, and sufficient classroom-time a given. However, I must confess that at times, I am myself in doubt whether this should be a priority in my teaching in the Pacific: as a christian socialist who teaches Second Testament Studies, I am torn between emphasising skills that are more immediately and obviously liberatory (I avoid the temptation of trying to define what that means

here), and those issues which require more extensive ‘background’ training, and which may upset old dogmas. After all, there is so much else that should also be part of a liberating, contextual-theological curriculum; the disgraceful performance of most churches and church leaders in Fiji since the May 2000 coup is an apt reminder in this respect. Nevertheless, I also believe that developing a contextual, liberating reading praxis in an academic setting ultimately benefits from an informed faith, not a sheltered one. It is not in anyone’s interest to contribute to a “fundamentalism of the left”, to use Assman’s phrase.⁷⁶ Therefore, from whichever theological perspective we may look at it (except, perhaps, a fundamentalist one), teaching and discussing the basics of the nature of the New Testament text should become part of our theological agenda in the Pacific.

Notes

1. This essay is a development of certain parts of somewhat different papers presented to the Fiji Biblical Association (Suva, May 1999) and to the Bible Translation Group of the Society of Biblical Literature (Boston, November 1999). I thank all those who commented in these meetings, especially Dr Eugene Nida.
2. For a standard introduction to textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible, see Tov, E, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, Assen: Van Gorcum, 1992. For a comparison of textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible with the Second Testament, see Adair, J R, ‘Old and New in Textual Criticism: Similarities, Differences, and Prospects for Cooperation’, *TC* 1 (1996) [<http://purl.org/TCJ>], accessed Sept. 19, 2000. A fairly conventional history of the Christian canon of Scriptures is presented by Bruce, F F, *The Canon of Scripture*. Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1988. A recent provocative discussion of the history of the canon of the Hebrew Bible / Old Testament is Davies, P R, *Scribes and Schools: The Canonization of the Hebrew Scriptures*, Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998.
3. The debate about what terms are most appropriate is quite substantial. For a basic argument in favour of ‘First / Second Testament’, the reader may be referred to J.A. Sanders’ essay ‘First Testament and Second’, *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 17 (1987) 47-49. One of the arguments for such a terminological change, namely that ‘old’ and ‘new’ have prejorative connotations, is of course culturally biased, or should I say, takes on different shades of meaning in different cultures.
4. I appreciate the advice of the editorial committee of the *Pacific Journal of*



Theology in this respect.

5. Eg McKenzie, S L & Haynes, S R (eds), *To Each Its Own Meaning: An Introduction to Biblical Criticisms and Their Application*, Louisville: Westminster / John Knox, 1993.

6. In this sense, we seem to have come full circle with the not-so-helpful 19th century concepts of 'higher' and 'lower' criticism, where the latter referred to textual criticism which was considered the first step *prior* to exegesis and hence 'theology proper'.

7. See Ehrman, B D, 'The Neglect of the Firstborn in New Testament Studies' (Presidential Lecture, Society of Biblical Literature South Eastern Region, March 1997), [<http://rosetta.atla-certr.org/TC/extras/ehrman-pres.html>], accessed February 2, 2001; see also Ehrman, B D, 'Text and Tradition: The Role of New Testament Manuscripts in Early Christian Studies' (The Kenneth W. Clark Lectures, Duke Divinity School, 1997. Lecture Two: Text and Transmission: The Historical Significance of the 'Altered' Text.), *TC* 5 (2000) [<http://purl.org/TC>] accessed Sept 9, 2000. – Perhaps one of the few places where textual criticism, at least in its basic forms, is still routinely taught, are German universities. Yet one my former New Testament professors is probably right when he says that this routine basic training in textual criticism is rather seen as 'a necessary [yet] nasty thing' ('ein notwendiges Übel') by most students; Haacker, K, *Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft: Eine Einführung in Fragestellungen und Methoden*, Wuppertal: Brockhaus, 1981, p. 32.

8. I am referring here to the text of the two standard critical editions, namely the United Bible Societies' *Greek New Testament* (from the 3rd edition onward: cf. Aland, B et al. [eds], *The Greek New Testament*, 4th ed., Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft & United Bible Societies, 1993) and the so-called 'Nestle-Aland' text issued by the German Bible Society (from the 26th edition onward: cf Aland, B et al. [eds], *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 27th ed., Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1993). While the UBS edition is supposedly designed for Bible translators, with a limited apparatus listing textual variations, *Nestle-Aland* is seen as a critical edition for scholars with more extensive textual information.

9. For serious students of the Second Testament, the standard works are Aland, B & Aland, K, *The Text of the New Testament: An Introduction to the Critical Editions and to the Theory and Practice of Modern Textual Criticism*, 2nd ed., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, Leiden: Brill, 1989; Metzger, B M, *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration*, 3rd ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992. Less detailed but also useful are: Greenlee, J H, *Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism*, Rev. ed., Peabody: Hendrickson, 1995; Vaganay, L & Amphoux, C-B, *An Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism*, 2nd ed., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991. There used to be quite useful introductions to such matters for non-specialists (ie not presupposing knowledge of Greek), such as Bruce, F F, *The Books and the Parchments: Some Chapters of the Transmission of the Bible*, Paperback rev. ed., London: Pickering & Inglis, 1971; or Moulton, H K, *Papyrus, Parchment and Print: The Story of How the New Testament Text has Reached Us*, London: Lutterworth, 1967. Unfortunately, they are outdated and out of print. More .

recently, Moir tried to write such an introduction again, which was completed by Elliott after his death but as yet I have not been able to see it myself: Elliott, J K & Moir, I, *Manuscripts and the Text of the New Testament: An Introduction for English Readers*, Edinburgh: Clark, 1995.

10. The following common abbreviations are used in this essay: UBS = United Bible Societies; UBSGNT = Aland, B *et al.* (eds), *Greek New Testament*, 4th ed.; Nestle-Aland = Aland, B *et al.* (eds), *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 27th ed.; AV = Authorized Version (= KJV, 'King James Version'); NIV = New International Version; REB = Revised English Bible; NRSV = New Revised Standard Version; CEV = Contemporary English Version; mss = manuscripts.

11. Scholars who use historical-critical methods are likely to increase this number further since many argue that certain NT writings (eg 2 Cor, Phil) are actually composites of originally separate writings. See standard "Introductions" to the Second Testament such as Kümmel, W G, *Introduction to the New Testament*, Rev. ed., Nashville: Abingdon, 1975, or perhaps Brown, R E, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, New York: Doubleday, 1997.

12. One exception may be Paul. While most scholars suggest that the 'Pauline school' (followers of Paul after his death) began collecting his letters, eventually resulting in the collection which found its way into the canon of the Second Testament, David Trobisch recently argued that it may have been Paul himself who began this process: see his book *Paul's Letter Collection: Tracing the Origins*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994.

13. In addition to the ancient Greek mss of the Second Testament, textual critics also make use of ancient translations of the New Testament ("versions") as well as the NT citations in the writings of the Church fathers.

14. On the struggle between what is usually seen as 'orthodoxy' and 'heresy', see the still useful classic work of Bauer, W, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971 (German original: 1934); for a discussion of the validity of its basic thesis, and references to recent literature, see Ehrmann, B D *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture: the Effect of the Early Christian Theological Controversies on the Text of the New Testament*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1993, pp 7-9.

15. See the usual discussions of the origins of the New Testament canon. Good examples are the classic discussion in Kümmel's textbook (*Introduction*, pp 475-513); the lengthy and theologically moderately conservative treatment by Metzger, B M, *The Canon of the New Testament: Its Origin, Development, and Significance*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1987; or the short and instructive book by Gamble, H Y, *The New Testament as Canon: Its Making and Meaning*, Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985. Still useful, though somewhat outdated, is the broader study by Hans von Campenhausen, *The Formation of the Christian Bible*, London: Black, 1972. Also important is: Beckwith, R, *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church and its Background in Early Judaism*, London: SPCK, 1985. The entries on the canon in the *Anchor Bible Dictionary* by J.A. Sanders and H.Y. Gamble (Vol. 1, New York: Doubleday, 1992, pp. 837-861) are very helpful as an introduction.



16. See, for instance, Gamble's *Anchor Bible Dictionary* entry on 'Canon: New Testament', cited above; also useful as an introductory text is Tuckett, C, *Reading the New Testament: Methods of Interpretation*, London: SPCK, 1987, pp 5-20.
17. This is, of course, not limited to Judaism and Christianity. Defining more closely what 'Scripture' is turns out to be a rather complex procedure; see Smith, W D, *What is Scripture? A Comparative Approach*, London: SCM, 1993.
18. See especially Gamble, *New Testament as Canon*; Metzger, *Canon of the New Testament*.
19. See Campenhausen, *Formation of the Christian Bible*.
20. Parker, D C, *The Living Text of the Gospels*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, pp 29.203-213.
21. Actually, the history of the *textus receptus* is quite a bit more complicated, and my brief notes on this section present a simplifying overview. The early edition of Erasmus was popularised by Robert Estienne (known as Stephanus), Theodor of Beza and others in the 16th and 17th century, but there are only relatively small differences between these editions that eventually acquired the name *textus receptus* due to advertising claims of the publishers Elzevier. For a brief but useful treatment of the history of the printed text, see Kümmel, *Introduction*, pp. 540-546. See also the standard works on textual criticism: Aland & Aland, *Text of the New Testament*, and Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*. There is an excellent overview of the historical issues in William W. Combs' article 'Erasmus and the Textus Receptus', *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 1 (1996) 35-53.
22. The attentive reader of the original AV / KJV Preface will notice of course that the translators made use of more than one Greek text, but the *textus receptus* was clearly predominant. My summary of this process inevitably simplifies much.
23. A brief and useful discussion of this issue is provided by Nida, E A, 'The New Testament Greek Text in the Third World', in: Epp, E J & Fee, G D (eds) *New Testament Textual Criticism – its Significance for Exegesis: Essays in Honour of Bruce M. Metzger*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1981, pp 375-80.
24. Aland & Aland, *Text of the New Testament*, p. 19.
25. For more details, see Aland & Aland, *The Text of the New Testament*, or Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*.
26. Once more, see Aland & Aland, *The Text of the New Testament*, or Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*.
27. While most Christian scribes were probably male, it is most likely that there were female scribes as well. See the argument of Kim Haines-Eitzen in her article "Girls Trained in Beautiful Writing": Female Scribes in Roman Antiquity and Early Christianity, *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 6 (1998) 629-646. I am grateful to the author for kindly sending me an offprint of her article. – For an overview of the use of scribes in antiquity, and possible inferences for the study of the Second Testament, see Richards, E R, *The Secretary in the Letters of Paul*. Tübingen: Mohr (Siebeck), 1989.
28. See Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption*.
29. See Botha, P J J, 'Living Voice and Lifeless Letters: Reserve towards Writing in

- the Graeco-Roman World', *Hervormde Teologische Studies* 49 (1993) 742-59; but see also H Y Gamble's critical comments in his important book, *Books and Readers in the Early Church: A History of Early Christian Texts*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995, chapter 1.
30. See Harris, W, *Ancient Literacy*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989.
31. This list basically follows Nida's classification; see 'New Testament Greek Text', p.378.
32. The reader will find convenient discussions of these text-critical problems in the usual historical-critical commentaries, but see also Metzger, B M, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed., Stuttgart: United Bible Societies, 1994.
33. See my paper 'Textual Criticism and the Publication of Bible Translations' (Paper read in at the Annual Meeting, Society for Biblical Literature, Bible Translation Section, Boston, USA, November 21, 1999), [<http://www.geocities.com/holgerszesnat/1999sbloralpresentation.pdf>] accessed Dec. 11, 1999. Time permitting, I hope to publish further work relating to English Bible translations elsewhere in the near future.
34. I should like to indicate my sincere appreciation for the assistance given by several PTC students and some faculty colleagues in analysing a number of Pacific Bible translations. In particular, I would like to thank Revs. Mataere Muaroro, Semisi Nimo, Levesi Afutiti, Kiriona Mafaufau, and Ms Tiliisi Bryce. Without their help in translating certain phrases in a number of Pacific Bible translations, I would not have been able to present this overview. However, none of the views I expound in this article should necessarily be attributed to them.
35. I must note a certain arbitrariness in my selection which is due to the limits imposed by the rather haphazard collection of Pacific Bible translations held at the George Knight Library of the Pacific Theological College, Suva, Fiji Islands.
36. For common English translations, see my paper cited above, 'Textual Criticism'.
37. I do not speak any of the languages in which the Bible translations here discussed are written. Obviously, this is not a preferable state of affairs. However, the fact is that critical analysis of Pacific Bible translations (certainly in the literature) is quite rare. As long as there are not sufficient numbers of indigenous translators and exegetes adequately trained and also willing to analyse Pacific Bible translations critically, outsiders like myself will be forced to stumble on. However, considering the basic nature of the analysis of Pacific Bible translations needed for this overview-essay, Pacific language skills were not crucial.
38. See Rickards, R, *In Their Own Tongues: The Bible in the Pacific*, Suva: Bible Society in the South Pacific, Canberra: Bible Society in Australia, 1996.
39. *Te Faufaa Api a to tatou Fatu e te ora a Iesu Mesia Ra* (Tahitian New Testament), Wellington: Bible Society in New Zealand, 1975. This seems to be a reprint of the 1884 translation (the fifth and final revision), again reproduced in 1978 by the Bible Society in Wellington, *Te Bibilia Mo'a Ra* (Tahitian Bible). The history of Tahitian translations is discussed in detail by Nicole, J, *Au Pied de L'Ecriture: Histoire*



de la Traduction de la Bible en Tahitien, ThD diss. Lausanne, Papeete: Haere Po No Tahiti, 1988.

40. Nicole, *Au Pied de L'Ecriture (passim)* mentions the problem of the *textus receptus* several times, and notes the 'TR-only policy' of the BFBS which supported the Tahitian translation in the 19th century.

41. *Fāeag Haiporakiag Fo'ou Nē 'Os Gagga Ka A'Maurige Jisu Karisto* (The New Testament in Rotuman), Wellington: British and Foreign Bible Society, 1968.

42. *O Le Tusi Paia* (The Holy Bible in Samoan), Rev. ed., Wellington: British and Foreign Bible Society, 1969.

43. In this regard, see also also the brief discussion in Mafaufau, K, *A Proposal for the Translation of the Greek New Testament into Samoan*, MTh thesis: Pacific Theological College, Suva, Fiji, 1992, pp 76-78.

44. Milner, G B, *Samoan Dictionary: Samoan - English, English - Samoan*, Auckland: Polynesian Press, 1966 (Reprint 1993).

45. *Ai Vola Ni Veiyalayalati Vou I Jisu Karisito* (The New Testament in Fijian, Revised), Suva: Bible Society in the South Pacific, 1987.

46. Anecdotal information. I should like to note here that the Tuvalu New Testament exhibits similar features. According to a recent analysis by my former student, Rev Semisi Nimo, all but Mk was translated on the basis of the GNB / TEV rather than the Greek text. (Text-critical indicators are also absent.) See Nimo, S, *The Case for a Revision of the Tuvalu New Testament: A Critical Analysis of Selected Texts*, BD Project, Pacific Theological College, Suva, Fiji Islands, 2000.

47. *Ai Vola Ni Veiyalayalati Vou I Jisu Karisito* (Fijian New Testament), Wellington: Bible Society in the South Pacific, 1973 (reprint of 1901).

48. Once more, I refer the reader to my paper cited above, 'Textual Criticism'.

49. For some comments on the socio-linguistic implications, see De Vries, L, 'Bible Translation and Primary Orality', *Bible Translator* 51 (2000) 101-114.

50. Once more, see my paper cited above, 'Textual Criticism'.

51. For an example of this sort of argument, see Junack, K, 'The Reliability of the New Testament Text from the Perspective of Textual Criticism', *Bible Translator* 29 (1978) 128-40.

52. See Aland & Aland, *Text of the New Testament*, and Koester, H, 'The Text of the Synoptic Gospels in the Second Century', in Petersen, W L (ed), *Gospel Traditions in the Second Century: Origins, Recensions, Text, and Transmission*, Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989, pp 19-37.

53. Eg. Epp, E J, 'The Multivalence of the Term 'Original Text' in New Testament Textual Criticism', *Harvard Theological Review* 92 (1999) 245-81; Adair, 'Old and New'; Parker, D C, 'Scripture is Tradition', *Theology* 94 (1991) 11-17, and Parker's book, *Living Text*.

54. Trobisch, *Paul's Letter Collection*.

55. For a brief discussion of the issue, see Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, pp 222-236.

56. See Epp, 'Multivalence'.

57. Parker, *Living Text*.

58. This argument was already questioned by Clark almost half a century ago, although the state of textual criticism today raises even more serious theological questions than he could imagine at the time. See Clark, K W, ‘Textual Criticism and Doctrine’, in: Sevenster, J N & Van Unnik, W C (eds), *Studia Paulina: in Honorem Johannes Zwaan, Septuagenarii*, Haarlem: Bohn, 1953, pp 52-65.

59. This is of course denied by those ultra-conservative ‘scholars’ (mostly in the USA) who advocate the retention of the AV / KJV text on the basis of the *textus receptus*, and who sometimes quite literally ‘bedevil’ modern textual criticism. For a rebuttal of the arguments of such TR advocates from a moderate or conservative perspective, see Fee, G D, ‘The Majority Text and the Original Text of the New Testament’, *Bible Translator* 31 (1980) 107-118; and Wallace, D B, ‘The Majority Text Theory: History, Methods, and Critique’, in Ehrman, B D & Holmes, M W (eds), *The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research: Essays on the Status Questionis (A Volume in Honor of Bruce M Metzger)*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995, pp. 297-320.

60. For some of the debate, see Sylva, D (ed), *Reimaging the Death of the Lukan Jesus*, Frankfurt: Iain, 1990.

61. See Ehrman, B D, ‘The Cup, the Bread, and the Salvific Effect of Jesus’ Death in Luke-Acts’, in Lovering, E H (ed) *Society of Biblical Literature 1991 Seminar Papers*, Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991, pp 576-591.

62. See, for instance: Brooks, J A, ‘The Text of the New Testament and Biblical Authority’, *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 34 (1992) 13-21; Dykes, G S, ‘Some Comments upon the Concept of Inerrancy and the Manuscript Variants in the Greek New Testament’, n.d. [<http://uzerweb.lightspeed.net/yhwh3in1/some.htm>], accessed Sept. 5, 2000; Wallace, D B, ‘Inspiration, Preservation, and New Testament Textual Criticism’ *Grace Theological Journal* 12 (1991) 21-50. I thank my former *Kommilitone* Matthias Gockel for sending me a photocopy of Brooke’s article from the library of Princeton Theological Seminary.

63. For instance, Fuller, D O, *Which Bible?*, Grand Rapids: Grand Rapids International Publications, 1970. Of course, there are also other, non-textual factors that go into such considerations as to whether to retain the AV / KJV version. For a critique of Fuller’s (and others’) work, see Fee, ‘Majority Text’, and Wallace, ‘Majority Text Theory’, in addition to the standard works of Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, and Aland & Aland, *The Text of the New Testament*.

64. Nida, ‘Greek Text’, p 380.

65. Mafaufau, *Proposal for the Translation*.

66. Rickards, *In Their Own Tongues*, pp. 196-197.

67. I have not been able to consult Moulton’s translation of 1880. If Rickards is correct, Moulton’s daring step was soon eliminated, since the 1884 edition of the Tongan translation prints Jn 7:53 - 8:11 normally, without any notes (*Koe Tobi Tabu Kataoa* 1958 [reprint 1884]).

68. The term ‘culture of silence’ here derives from Paulo Freire’s work in developing a liberatory paedagogy in Latin America; see particularly his groundbreaking study *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, New York: Herder, 1970. People in



various cultures around the world have found this a useful concept to work with. For some appropriations in Pacific Island contexts, see Bretani-Shafer, N, *A Theoretical Analysis of Paulo Freire's Literacy Model in View of the Chamorro Socio-Cultural Context*, PhD diss. University of Oregon, USA, 1989; Meo, J I, *Developing a Liberation Education Model for the Methodist Theological College in the Fiji Islands*, PhD diss., Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tenn., USA, 1989; Siu-Maliko, M A, *Towards an Educational Process for Empowerment with Reference to the Au-Uso of the Methodist Church in Samoa*, MTh thesis, Pacific Theological College, Suva, Fiji Islands.

69. The famous quote is part of his anonymously published poetic essay entitled *An Essay in Criticism*, published in 1711 by Lewis in London (facsimile ed. by Scolar Press, 1970).

70. Quoted in Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, p. 108 n.2. Metzger does not discuss which mss (if any) Swift might have been referring to when he published this essay in 1708; perhaps he simply made it up. Nevertheless, it might have been 1 Tim 3:16. Here the TR reads "God [*theos*] was manifest in the flesh" (AV). But modern research in textual criticism shows that the reading of the relative pronoun *hos* is much more likely as the oldest text form ("he who was manifest in the flesh"). The passage and this change in wording might not strike us as a vital argument concerning the trinity, but in 1730, Johann Jacob Wettstein was actually dismissed from his post as a minister in Basel, Switzerland, because he had published a Greek New Testament text which suggested *inter alia* that the *textus receptus* was incorrect at that very point; see Haacker, *Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*, p. 32.

71. Nida, 'New Testament Greek 'Text', p. 377.

72. See Ernst, M, *The Role of Social Change in the Rise and Development of New Religious Groups in the Pacific Islands*, Hamburg: Lit Verlag, 1996.

73. On fundamentalism, see for instance: Barr, J, *Fundamentalism*, London: SCM, 1977; Bawer, B, *Stealing Jesus: How Fundamentalism Betrays Christianity*, New York: Crown, 1997; Boone, K C, *The Bible Tells Them So: the Discourse of Protestant Fundamentalism*, London: SCM, 1990; Brouwer, S, Gifford, P & Rose, S D, *Exporting the American Gospel: Global Christian Fundamentalism*, London: Routledge, 1996.

74. For some hints in this direction, see Arichea, D C, 'Taking Theology Seriously in the Translation Task', *Bible Translator* 33 (1982) 309-316; Ellingworth, P, 'Theological Reflections on the Textual Criticism of the Bible', *Bible Translator* 46 (1995) 119-125; Scanlin, H P, 'Bible Translation as a Means of Communicating New Testament Textual Criticism to the Public', *Bible Translator* 39 (1988) 101-113.

75. One can take this issue one step further and argue that Bible translators must consciously embrace the theological and indeed ideological nature of their task. In this sense, J A Sanders has called for more explicit awareness with reference to the anti-Jewish use of certain texts of the Bible: "we should offer historically dynamic translations or we should print in banner headlines across the top of the usual formal equivalence translations of the gospels and Acts that they were written decades after the events recounted in a quite different situation with regard to Christianity's Jewish origins. The present falsehood, with all the pain and damage it

has for centuries caused both Christians and Jews, cannot in good conscience be permitted to continue." ("The Hermeneutics of Translation", *Explorations: Rethinking Relationships among Protestant, Catholics and Jews* 12.2 [1998] 1). Similarly, in a Pacific context, Dolores Yilibuw has raised the issue of translating the Biblical texts deliberately to subvert the suppression of women's voices ("Tampering with Bible Translation in Yap", *Semeia* 76 [1996] pp 21-38).

76. Assman, H, *Theology for a Nomad Church*, Maryknoll: Orbis, p 104.



From Communication to Communion

Definition:

To deal with the question of Communication and Theology is to step into a very wide issue that could not be tackled in one single session in a consultation. To begin with, I would prefer to say honestly that maybe there is no such thing as a 'theology of communication'. I feel that if we are too affirmative at this point we might end up closing the discussion even before we can start.

First of all, we must try to discover more about this vast question of what communication is, so that we might be better equipped in our mission to be communicators of the Gospel. For this task, it is very important to define the extent to which this question has affected our understanding of communication.

I think it is very important also at this point to clarify our position concerning the various words that we use when we talk about communication and information. There are still some people who are confused about these two words. It is my understanding that information is one form of communication and that there are some other forms as well.

Ralph Teinaore

The late Rev. Ralph Teinaore was a former student of the Pacific Theological College and was involved in both theological education, teaching at Hermon, and church administration i.e. being the General Secretary of his Church until he died. He was well known in both English and French speaking christian organisations. His life could be well summed up as "a person of respect, courtesy and faith ... hardworking and devoted," were words used by the President of Tahiti, Diana Tere to describe him. The late Ralph presented this article at the WACC Pacific Consultation on Communication and Theology 28th September to 4th October, 2000, Paofai, Papeete, Tahiti.

For instance, when we consider Christian communication, we can identify at least four different forms, from the highest to the lowest. These forms constitute the very being of Christian communication. We have information, teaching, preaching and witnessing.

According to this point of view, information is the lowest form of communication. This is when someone considers it a duty to announce to another person a fact that is being ignored. Information can become the beginning of teaching. It is considered to be the lowest level of communication because it is a one-way information, no matter what media we use. The others will receive the information and that is it. Information does not allow a person-to-person relationship.

Teaching would be on a higher level for this very reason. The disciple or the student could look for truth in, and verify the integrity of, the teacher. Questions could be raised and control of the knowledge acquired could be checked.

Preaching, the third level of communication, is at a higher level than teaching, no matter what is the content of the message. The relation that exists between a preacher and the public is far more important than the relation between a teacher and a disciple. The main reasons are that there is a more concrete commitment on the part of the preacher to participate in the building-up or reinforcement of the unity of the group. In preaching there is always an attempt to convince the other and to participate in the education of people. We may say that acquiring knowledge is a must but learning how to contribute to the development of humanity and spirituality in the people should be our everyday concern.

That is why we have the highest form of communication in witnessing. It is the fourth form because it is not only restricted to the simple transmission, into a group or between two individuals, of facts and ideas. It touches the very foundation of the values by which we exist. In the meeting with the other we struggle for these values to be perpetuated and shared among people. We have to be witnesses of these values, to



help others to search for these values and thus become bearers of News that builds up the faith of others. The last level of communication, then, slowly contributes to the task of leading people from communication to communion.

The Place of Communion

In our attempt to define communication, we must not limit ourselves to defining it according to the meaning of the word and its root. We would then be repeating like many others that ‘communication’ comes from the Latin word *communis* (‘common’) or *communicare* (‘to establish a community’, ‘to share’). There is a corporate factor involved. Communication happens when the elements of interchange and dialogue are present between individuals or within a group; but we still need to identify the proper place of communication.

Communication happens when the elements of interchange and dialogue are present between individuals or within a group; but we still need to identify the proper place of communication

When we start to do this, we tend to give a very fast answer by saying that the place for communication is in ecclesiology. It is true that the task of all Christians is to give an account of, and reason for, the existence of this historic community which for twenty centuries has been named ‘the Church of Christ’. In doing so, we are answering to the mandate given to the Apostles and to every Christian. As the book of Acts reminds us, ‘You will be witnesses for me in Jerusalem, in all Judaea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth’!¹

Of course, the unending question will arise for all Christians: how am I to communicate the Gospel that I have been commissioned to transmit to all the nations and to every generation? This question has accompanied us through time and nowadays it has become more urgent because of the new problems we encounter in communication.

Even though this is an important question, in some ways it is a secondary question, because in theology the question ‘how?’ is never the first one. It is far more important to identify first the message that we want to share with the world. So at that point it is better to give priority to the questions of ‘what is the Gospel that we want to communicate?’ and ‘who is the Church that has to communicate it?’ If we avoid this first step in our quest, we may find ourselves in a dead-end road. We will become just like the people giving advertisement and propaganda for the benefit of an institution that we call the Church without daring to question the suitability of that name.

In saying this, we come to the point of asking if the Church is that very place where communication should start. In doing so we may risk taking as a starting-point the dichotomy between the Church and the World. Ecclesiastical theology has a very big problem in the sense that it appears to be judging the world in its preaching. The Church over the centuries has isolated itself from the world in giving a false interpretation of its role as the messenger of God in the world.

We find examples of this in the time of the Inquisition in Europe and whenever the Church has compromised itself in actions that serve solely economic interests. Above all, every time the Church has thought of itself as the place where we should be punished because of our sins, then it has ceased to be the Church of Christ doing its duty of communicating the Gospel to the World.

In the field of Christology we have a better chance of real acceptance of this world that, as we were told, God ‘loved so much that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him may not die but have eternal life’

As a consequence of this, we must choose a place other than ecclesiology . for communication, and that place should be Christology. Here it is not the ‘how?’ question but rather the ‘what?’ and the ‘who?’ questions that come first.



In focusing here, we will avoid the dichotomy between the world and the Church, and the use of improper means of communication. In the field of Christology we have a better chance of real acceptance of this world that, as we were told, God 'loved so much that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him may not die but have eternal life'.²

It is in this place that a chance is offered to us to have a real freedom from the century, from its closing doors and its spirit of slavery. Here we discover that communication is a living process and not a problem that we have to resolve. Thus we enter into the liberating process, the process of understanding God's decisive action in the person of Jesus Christ, the Word of God. It is a complete action of God to create and redeem: not an information but an act.

In Jesus Christ we discover that we as Christians are situated in a context of listening and responsibility. Our humanity finds its meaning in the call that we receive from God and also through the answer that we send back as our response. So, then, communication

Our humanity finds its meaning in the call that we receive from God and also through the answer that we send back as our response

is not an element in our human life: it is the very essence of it. It is at the very heart of our historical and collective humanity. It is the new covenant that exists between God and humanity. This new covenant re-opens communication between God and human beings: it re-establishes humanity as an authorised negotiator. Resurrection is the proof of the new status of the world, even if at some points humanity has closed the doors and refused to respond to God.

The Church is the place where this recognition is acknowledged and re-transmitted. Therefore the Church participates in this ministry of reconciliation and submits itself to the service of God as an instrument for building up the new humanity. The interpersonal reality is accomplished, communication is opened and the new humanity enters into history as the place of reconciliation and love.

The Covenant as a Place for Communication

The covenant is the promise of the opening and re-opening of communication. We have a critical example of this in Ephesians 2:12. This text underlines very strongly the state in which the letter's addressees were before they could be part of the covenant. They were apart from Christ and not included in the chosen people. They had no part in the covenants, which were based on God's promises to the people living in this world without hope and without God. Now that they are part of the new covenant, the promise is also open to them: the excommunication is lifted. This opening is due to the action of Jesus Christ who has destroyed the walls of separation.

The theme of the covenant is one of the great themes in the Hebrew tradition. In the Old Testament — the 'ancient covenant' to be precise — this theme has a wide range of significations. The word 'covenant' is a translation of the Hebrew word *berith*. Gerhard von Rad, in *The Theology of the Old Testament*, said that this word 'could mean the covenant itself and its ceremonial, but it could also designate the common relationship that this covenant is creating between two partners.'³

In the Hebrew tradition, this new covenant was announced by the prophets.⁴ The first Christian community understood the coming and action of Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of that new covenant. Every nation participates now with Israel in the promise of the covenant. Human beings, who were separated by language barriers, now have the possibility of understanding each other. The Spirit opens the heart and allows communication. God is communicating to all the nations of the world and no longer to a particular people.

In this perspective, every theological theme can be enlightened by our understanding of the new covenant as the opening up of communication. The possibilities offered by the new covenant allow communication on a new basis, and even go so far as showing the obstacles that would render communication impossible.

The theological investigation of communication will take very seriously



this danger of impossibility of the relationship because of the walls of separation that do exist between nations as well as between persons. The new covenant exists to bring light to the walls of separation so that we will not fall to sleep taking for granted the existence of these walls. Jesus Christ has abolished the divisions between people. In his person he has destroyed hatred and built a new people with the new covenant.

The covenant contains a promise that opens communication, proposing an identity of relevance to everyone: the identity of a new human being and a new humanity. The question of identity of the human being, beside that of communication, is critical; they are very much inter-related. Communication contains the identity of those who communicate. The identity of human beings implies for them the possibility of communicating among themselves. Identity and communication are interdependent. This interdependence was well known to the first generation of the Christian community and they interpreted it in the light of the theme of the new human being.

Along that line we have the example of Saint Paul, who experienced a change of identity, as we can read in 1 Corinthians.⁵ Paul had this capacity to change his identity. He was Jewish with the Jews, Gentile with the Gentiles and so forth. He ceased to be what he was, to become the one that he needed to be. We know what he was before, as he has told us in Philippians: 'I was circumcised when I was a week old. I am an Israelite by birth, of the tribe of Benjamin, a pureblooded Hebrew. As far as keeping the Jewish Law, I was a Pharisee, and I was so zealous that I persecuted the Church. As far as a person can be righteous by obeying the commands of the Law, I was without fault.'⁶

We also know from Galatians what Paul is becoming: 'It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me.'⁷ Paul is then a man who moves from an ethnic, cultural, religious identity to a Christological identity that is intimate and at the same time evidently universal.

This transformation was present in every Christian generation but not with the same intensity and suffering as the first Christian community,

who had accepted the death of its Jewish identity to rise again with the Christian identity. They did experience with the same intensity our own transformation, because our ethnic, cultural, religious identities are submitted today to new pressures and to the challenge of a world that is changing very quickly and has reached new dimensions that are very hard to control and to comprehend.

Communion: Hope for Communication

Paul is then a man who changes identity. In this example we have the place where the themes of identity, communication and the new being are bound together. We discover at the same time that the price that one has to pay to allow communication is the crucifixion of one's identity. That is what we call the death of the self. It happens whenever a husband is ready to accept questions to his manhood to be closer to his wife, or when a European is ready to throw away superiority to become the authentic friend of an African.

This phenomenon takes place with pain and suffering, such as Paul experienced on the road to Damascus. However, the phenomenon is also liberating, as Paul discovered later on in his work as an Apostle. Through this process that calls us to die and to rise again, a promise of communication comes into being. Everything becomes possible, just as Paul had the possibility of being Jewish with the Jews, Greek with the Greeks and a slave with the slaves.

However, this process of the death of the identity could also be misunderstood. The dying process could be distorted and could lead to perversions and downgrading of the promise of communication. This process could be transformed into seductive advertisement and propaganda. It could become demagogic and tyrannical and lead to destruction. We have the examples of the Jimmy Jones mass suicide group and more recently the strange and destructive outcome of the 'Solar Temple' group in Switzerland, France and Canada.

To avoid such misinterpretations, we need to affirm that the process of



the crucifixion of our identity, and the promise of communication, needs reference to the new human being, according to what was announced and realised through the person and action of Christ. Paul has said something about the new Adam, who is the 'life-giving Spirit'.⁸ The One who has called Paul on the road to Damascus to get rid of his old identity has also accepted a crucifixion of identity to become 'Christ in all'.⁹

Christ the new human being takes up our temporary, unfinished, limited and second-rate identities to offer us a new and universal identity, the one of a new and true humanity able to practise communication according to the criteria of the new covenant. The new humanity is communion, *koinonia*, fellowship and promotion of solidarity in order to develop a capacity for existence in the community of believers.

The Gospel would then be understood as a message, a message that needs to be communicated. To get to the truth, the Gospel is communication. God who was afar has now come close to us and is communicating with

humanity. Every human being that I meet is my equal; he or she is at the same level as me. Communication is Good News, and that Good

Communication is Good News, and that Good News contains the promise of communication offered and accessible to everyone

News contains the promise of communion offered and accessible to everyone.

This apostolic recommendation reminds us that communion, the culmination of communication, is at the same time a promise and a mission, a granted gift and a fulfilled responsibility. It implies sacrifice, which through all the obstacles allows a new human being to emerge for communion. Communication thus reaches the status of a gift that ends up in sharing.

Communion, the hope for communication, depends mainly on our

capacity to make this first step. Jesus was able to make this step not only at the ultimate moment of his crucifixion but also in his meetings with the Pharisees, the prostitutes and other people of poor conditions. Because of his readiness to destroy the walls of separation, he allowed all these people without hope to come closer to him and to believe in the promise of communion.

Biblical Perspectives on Communication

It always strikes me that we have examples of communication in nearly every Bible text that we read, study and comment on in preaching or Bible studies. There are some texts where the content is very clear and the message about communication can be picked out very easily.

Take 1 Corinthians 13:1: 'I may be able to speak in the languages of men and even angels, but if I have not love, my speech is no more than a noisy gong or a clanging bell.' This shows us very clearly that the dimension of love is related to communication. I believe it has helped a lot of our pastors and preachers to see that their sermons are for the people and not for their own benefit.

We find more examples in the stories about the miracles accomplished by Jesus, especially the story of the deaf-mute,¹⁰ where Jesus performs more than a sign. Communication has been re-established so that the deaf-mute can communicate as other human beings.

The Old Testament is not forgotten, since we have here some examples of the way the prophets (for instance) communicated the message of God to the people of Israel. We have the example of Jeremiah who even used non-verbal means of communication to explain to the people of Israel the decision taken by God for them. We remember that he was asked to wear an ox-yoke on his shoulders so that the people could see God's decision to deport them as slaves to Babylon. Even though Hananiah destroyed the wooden yoke, Jeremiah came back with a stronger one made of iron, to reaffirm the decision of God.¹¹

Of course, we have to be reminded also about the attitude of the prophets



who have always delivered the message of God without fear. The prophet Nathan is among them, as he went courageously to tell King David that he had sinned against the Lord. His explanation of the problem and description of how King David was to be punished should be read, I believe, by all diplomats and peace mediators.

The images he used would have made Nathan a good film director nowadays, but of course in the context of those days and with the power King David had, Nathan was taking a big risk. This example of Nathan facing King David should inform us on how, as communicators, we should tackle problems when they arise. There is no communication without problems.

I believe that, in some situations, we may answer back to false information and respond in order to re-establish the truth. However, maybe there are also situations when the church leaders should keep silent and not give any answer. I am thinking of the text from John 4: the encounter between the Samaritan woman and Jesus. We have in this text many of the elements to help us to comprehend how communication could work. The story starts with the information that Jesus has been forced to leave Judaea and go back to Galilee. That is so because the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was winning more disciples than John. When he heard that, Jesus left.

He left because the communication about him was false and had been perverted. Information containing this mixture of truth and falsehood is so easy to compose when someone tries to manipulate the public audience, so hard to sort out as a journalist and so hard to emerge from when we are the victim. For Jesus, the situation was a serious one and there was no other way for him than to leave Jerusalem. Even if the exact details and motives are not known, we may think that it would have been worthless for him to answer back.

In this sort of situation, there are only two possible attitudes: either to answer back and confront the problem caused by the false information, or to leave. Jesus chose to leave, temporarily. When we face the problem,

explanations are required. It may even be necessary to bring a suit in court against the person that has started the rumours, especially when these are close to defamation and calumny. It is not an easy task and sometimes it can make the situation worse.

In such situations, Jesus did not always leave and did in some other places publish a communiqué. Luke tells us that ‘some Pharisees came to Jesus and said to him, “You must get out of here and go somewhere else, because Herod wants to kill you.” Jesus answered them, “Go tell that fox: I am driving out demons and performing cures today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will finish my work. Yet I must be on my way today, tomorrow and the next day; it is not right for a prophet to be killed anywhere except in Jerusalem”’.¹²

From time to time, then, Jesus answered back. For him at that moment, Herod was no more than a fox whom Jesus was not afraid to send back to care for his own business. His own programme was far more important than that of Herod the fox. The fox was to disappear, but Jesus was called to life after his death.

At other times, Jesus requested his disciples not to tell anyone who he was. That took place for instance in Caesarea Philippi. The main reason here was that Jesus did not want the crowd of his followers to have that information at that moment, because the priority was the training of the disciples in the mandate he was preparing to deliver to them. At other moments, when he was curing some of the sick people who came to him, he also asked them not to tell anyone who it was that cured them. We can call that the secret of God. In terms of modern communication, there was an embargo on this information.

There are times, for example in Matthew 25, where Jesus says that communication will reach its peak in the final judgement. Secrets will be revealed to everyone: not only showing up the good and bad actions of all but also revealing ourselves as completely as possible, allowing each person to rediscover himself or herself. The last judgement reveals to each our own secrets, the secrets we were carrying without knowing



it. God is the only one who is able to reveal us completely to ourselves. ‘There is nothing that can be hidden from God; everything in all creation is exposed and lies open before God’s eyes. And it is to God that we must all give an account of ourselves.’¹³

Everything will be exposed, naked, when the time comes. Every secret will become clear: the family, the professional, the economic and the military secrets are included. At the time of total communication, all the ‘embargoes’ will be lifted. All the hesitations will be washed away, all the bad or good reasons that we may have not to communicate will be cancelled. Everything will be exposed. Everything should be exposed. The tension here is between the secret about ourselves that we want to keep, and the light that God brings into that secret. This new dimension to communication will be accomplished entirely at the final judgement, but it comes into effect right now wherever the Gospel is announced.

Conclusion

Michael Traber once said, ‘the opposite of communication is not silence but sinfulness, the refusal to be in communion’.¹⁴ John Bluck added that ‘sin is everything that prevents or distorts communication, symbolised by the devil, who in biblical terms is a liar. Communication, as a theological word, becomes an issue of right relationship with God and each other, presupposing dignity, equality and freedom’.¹⁵ The very essence of communication is the Gospel. There is a need, then, to liberate the means through which the Gospel should be proclaimed, so that everyone may come into communion with the One who has sent us as messengers of grace.

*The very essence of communication
is the Gospel*

Notes

- 1 Acts 1.8
- 2 John 3.16
- 3 Gerhard von Rad, *The Theology of the Old Testament*, ???
- 4 Jeremiah 31.31, Ezekiel 36.26.
- 5 1 Corinthians 9.19-23.
- 6 Philippians 3.5-7.
- 7 Galatians 2.20.
- 8 1 Corinthians 15.45
- 9 Colossians 3.11
- 10 For example in Mark 7.31-37.
- 11 Jeremiah 27.
- 12 Luke 13.31-33.
- 13 Hebrews 4.13.
- 14 ??
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Eco-Theology and its Application to the Pacific Context

The contemporary ecological issues taking place at a local, regional and global level are among the main concerns of the international community that require urgent attention and practical responses. The author's own experience and awareness of contemporary ecological issues in the Pacific have urged him to write on this subject. People need to know that they belong to the earth, rather than the earth belongs to them.

The scientific prediction about sea level rise due to global warming and other factors is perhaps one of the greatest threats to the lives and the islands of the Pacific people, especially those living on low-lying atolls which are only a few meters (3 to 10 metres) above average sea level. Contemporary ecological issues in the Pacific demand urgent attention and responses from government and Church leaders not only in the Pacific but also at the international level.

The Pacific Christian Churches and theologians in particular, have an important role to play in the context of contemporary ecological issues. With the help of the Holy Spirit, theologians need to reflect on these ecological issues in the light of the Scriptures, the Christian faith, and the teaching of the Church. Moreover, Pacific theologians have an important task and responsibility to encourage people



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to preserve the integrity of creation, to work for the liberation of the people of the Pacific, and to promote global solidarity and justice for the good of all.

If theology in the Pacific is to be contextual, it must not ignore the

There is no doubt that the ecological crisis experienced by the people of the Pacific today is one of the crucial issues which Pacific theology must seriously take into consideration

contemporary ecological issues in the Pacific. A relevant, practical and “down-to-earth” theology is needed today, one

that will focus not only on ‘life after death’ but on the current issues and concrete experiences of the local people. There is no doubt that the ecological crisis experienced by the people of the Pacific today is one of the crucial issues which Pacific theology must seriously take into consideration. Theologians in the Pacific must bear in mind that they are called to theologize not in a ‘vacuum’ but in the midst of people’s life situations and concrete experiences.

The Church has an important duty to be in touch with people’s life situations and experiences and to show solidarity and concern for their problems, fears and aspirations. The Vatican II document, The Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et Spes) reminds us that, “at all times the Church carries the responsibility of reading the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the gospel, if it is to carry out its task ... We must be aware of and understand the aspirations, the yearnings, and the often dramatic features of the world in which we live”.¹

Ecological issues today have become one of the major concerns of all citizens of the world at all levels: local, regional and international. There is a growing awareness that there are more serious ecological issues in the world today compared to a few centuries ago. The seriousness of these ecological issues varies from place to place. There is no doubt that the rise of sea level is considered to be the greatest threat to both the islands and the lives of people of the Pacific, especially those living on low coral atolls. The harmful effects and destructive consequences of the attitudes and activities of foreign countries on the lives of the



Pacific people and their environment is the main concern of this article.

Contemporary ecological issues at the global level

Ecology is the branch of science that deals with the relationships living things have to each other and to their environment. Whether large or small, simple or complex, no organism lives alone. Each depends in some significant way upon other living and non-living things in its surroundings. There is no doubt that the study of ecology has increased our understanding of the world and the interrelationships, interdependence, and the interconnection between all forms of life.² This is important because the survival and well being of the human race depend on other life forms on earth. Even a single ecological problem in one corner of the earth can have great effects on other life forms, on non-living things and can even affect the life of people living in other parts of the world.

Pollution: In this modern world, as science and technology progress dramatically, more and more ecological problems are also being experienced in all parts of the world. For instance due to industrial activities in scientific-technological cultures there is an increased concern about environmental pollution, such as air pollution, water pollution, and soil pollution.

Deforestation and extinction of bio-diversity: It must be noted that one environmental problem can cause or intensify other ecological issues. For instance “tropical deforestation contributes significantly to global warming, causes land degradation and rapidly diminishes biodiversity”.³ While deforestation in wealthier countries accounts for the vast majority of forest loss to date, there is a growing concern that deforestation is increasing in poor, developing countries. James B. Martin-Schramm expresses this concern when he says that, “studies indicate an increasing rate of deforestation in poor, developing countries, where tropical forests are being cleared at a rate of 25.4 million hectares (38 million acres) a year. Over the span of ten years, deforestation at this rate is equivalent to an area the size of Malaysia, the Philippines, Ghana, the Congo, Ecuador, El Salvador and Nicaragua combined”.⁴

In his book, “Population Perils and the Churches’ Response”, James B. Martin-Schramm points out that among experts who have studied ecological problems, there are two points on which there is considerable consensus. “First, citizens of the wealthy industrialized countries are responsible for the majority of the planet’s environmental degradation to date. Second, growing populations in poor, less industrialized countries may soon match the level of ecological degradation perpetrated by wealthier countries”.⁵ An urgent response is needed by the international community to protect and preserve the environment.

Climate Change: On a global level there has been a strong concern about global warming. “Scientists are increasingly convinced that the earth is getting hotter because of the buildup in the atmosphere of carbon dioxide and other gases produced largely by the burning of fossil fuels. For each month this year (1998), average global temperature has been the highest on record”⁶, according to Time Magazine.

There are different opinions among scientists regarding the actual rate of global warming and the rise in sea level:

Most scientists, however, tend to support the projections made by the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). Based on projected rates of population growth, deforestation and energy use and efficiency, the panel estimated in 1992 that there would be an increase in the global mean temperature of 2.5 degree Celsius by the year 2100. This rate of warming is five times greater than that which occurred over the last century. ... Previously, temperature changes of 1-2 degree Celsius took place over a millennium; humanity is now precipitating similar changes in a matter of decades, with potentially grave consequences.⁷

Martin-Schramm warns that: “projected levels of global warming will affect every ecosystem on earth. Sea levels are expected to rise at least one meter by the end of the next century, threatening wetland habitats and human settlements. ... Projected increases in global rainfall and temperature will also cause a change in existing crop boundaries with



an adverse effect on overall food production".⁸

Increase of World population: Over the span of 39 years, "the population of the world had doubled from just under 3 billion in 1958 to nearly 6 billion in 1997".⁹ Janet Parker and Roberta Richards state that "currently the world's population is expanding by some two hundred fifty thousand humans per day, and will reach six billion by the turn of the century".¹⁰ They continue: "the results of unsustainable population growth and consumption are well known: squalid cities teeming with human misery, famine, extinction of thousands of life forms, dwindling resources, and burgeoning garbage heaps".¹¹ It is obvious that the problem of overpopulation can lead to a variety of environmental issues.

Call to Action in the Pacific

The significance of ecological awareness and concern lies in the fact that it must lead a person or a group to action. Out of their ecological awareness and concern,

a number of people, groups, religious bodies, government leaders and non-government organisations have committed themselves to fight against the

foreign forces that have exploited the Pacific people and their environment. A call for action to liberate the people of the Pacific and their environment from foreign exploitation must include a demand by the Pacific islands for the reduction of greenhouse gases caused by the powerful industrial nations.

The policy of reducing greenhouse gas emission levels, especially carbon dioxide, as agreed at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 is useless and meaningless if it is not being put into practice by industrialized countries. The convention on climate change, signed by representatives of 165 countries in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1992,¹² called upon industrialized countries to stabilize greenhouse emissions by the year

A call for action to liberate the people of the Pacific and their environment from foreign exploitation must include a demand by the Pacific islands for the reduction of greenhouse gases caused by the powerful industrial nations

2000 in order to counteract global warming.

During the 1997 climate change conference in Kyoto, Japan, the industrialized nations agreed in principle to cut their emissions of greenhouse gases.¹³ This sounds wonderful but the real concern is how these industrial nations actually put this into action. It seems that very little has been done to reduce the production of these gases in the United States according to Joan Brown Campbell, the general secretary of the National Council of Churches in the United States.¹⁴

It seems that the only hope for the small islands in the Pacific is when the industrialized countries commit themselves to reduce the emission of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases. However, very little has been done so far. Dr Hallman says that “the main obstacle to negotiations was US domestic politics. Many politically influential United States’ industrial giants did not want to see aggressive change in the consumption of energy. Also, the Republican-dominated US Congress did not especially support internationally negotiated regulations on industry”.¹⁵

In an article entitled, “*Waewaeraken Taari*” (Sea level rise), Atiera Tetoa¹⁶ of Kiribati reported that a team of representatives from the Alliance of Small Island States had visited Europe, especially countries that contribute to carbon dioxide emission, and pleaded with them for the reduction of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. It has been reported also that a few countries have reduced their carbon dioxide emission by 20 per cent but the target is 60 per cent, says Atiera Tetoa.

Another Kiribati National newspaper (“Uekera”, Number 7, February 13, 1998), reported that:

China and the United States have agreed to establish a cooperative front against environmental destruction. The two nations, at the Beijing meeting of leading environmental protection officials from China and the United States, have agreed that cooperation based on equality between them is essential to solving serious global environmental problems.¹⁷

Both countries are the top big nations contributing to the emission of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. “The United States is currently the top offender, discharging 22 percent of the world’s total greenhouse gas into the atmosphere. China, with 14 percent, ranks second”.¹⁸ Their decision and commitment to the reduction of greenhouse gases will have a great impact on the lives and future of the Pacific people, especially on the low-lying atolls.

Noel Bruyns, reports that “the Alliance of Small Island States, which includes low-lying Pacific Islands, likely to be the first victims of rising sea levels resulting from global warming, wants the industrialized countries to further reduce their emissions of carbon dioxide by 20 per cent by the year 2005”.¹⁹ All that the Pacific Island States can do is to raise their complaints and cry for justice but it is up to the big industrial nations to respond. Will the bigger nations hear the cry of the people of the Pacific? This is a question that each industrial nation must seriously take into consideration.

As part of their campaign, “leaders of the 16-nation forum’s six smallest countries – the Cook Islands, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, the Marshall Islands and Tuvalu – are deeply concerned about the effects of global warming. Their decision to lobby Mr Bush on the United States’ move not to ratify the Kyoto Protocol is being backed by the area’s bigger states”.²⁰

World Council of Churches’ protests against global warming

In their effort to fight against global warming and its complex consequences, the WCC launched a petition campign to put pressure on the government of the 15 industrialised nations to make definite and concrete decisions in reducing the ‘greenhouse gases’.

Lukas Vischer, a retired WCC official who has spearheaded a ‘climate chang’ campaign among the WCC’s 330 member churches, says that even though mor than 150 nations have ratified the Climate Change Convention (CCC) aopted by the United Nations in 1992, no clear targets have bee set for the reduction of carbon dioxide. He describes the United Sates as the prime culprit and added that even though the

US signed the convention, “George Bush (the president at that time) resisted specific steps, declaring that the US standard of living is non-negotiable”.²¹

According to Vischer the WCC petition campaign has two aims: one is to influence governments to take more decisive action and secondly, to change the consciousness of Christians around the world. Churches and nations are aware of the problem but the main thing is how to implement concrete actions that will promote a more peaceful and just world. Lukas Vischer, also states that “the time seems right for sustained church action to persuade the governments of developed countries to take specific steps to reverse climate change.”²² He continues: “people and governments in industrialised nations needed to hear from people in places like Choisuel. It is much harder to convince people in industrialised nations to notice what global warming is doing to the planet”.²³

Dr Sam Kobia, the director of the WCC’s Unit of Justice, Peace and Creation says that the WCC has been “conducting a petition campaign in industrialised countries to build public support for a strong and binding international agreement on reducing gas emissions into the atmosphere”.²⁴ He goes on to say that a petition campaign plans to visit European countries, Canada, the United States, Australia and New Zealand.

Noel Bruyns states that the WCC petition campaign has the support of numerous bodies, including the Lutheran World Federation, the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, the Council of European Churches, the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, the Young Men Christian Association and the Young Women Christian Association. The endorsements from the Anglican and Methodists churches were expected later that year (1996). Joan Brown Campbell, the US National Council of Churches general secretary, describes the negative response of the US government regarding the reduction in the emission of carbon dioxides by saying that: “After meeting with the Administration and members of Congress on this issue, we have concluded that our government is just not hearing enough from people who care about the future of God’s good creation”.²⁵ There is a great need for the big industrial nations to listen



and to respond to the fears and stories of the Pacific people and what is happening to their islands.

All the above commitments for the protection and preservation of the lives of the Pacific people and their environment are an important aspect of the liberation process from foreign domination and exploitation. It is important to note that protest and resistance against those who are responsible for the contemporary ecological issues in the Pacific have come not only from the Pacific peoples themselves but also from the international community as well through international organisations like the United Nations, World Council of Churches, Greenpeace and NGOs. Without the support and assistance of the international community, the people of the Pacific cannot achieve much.

Among various ecological issues in the Pacific, sea level rise due to global warming seems to be the most frightening one for the people of Tuvalu, the Marshall Islands, and Kiribati (where the author comes from). If it is true that the sea level will increase by a few metres within the next century, the low-lying atolls that are about one to two feet above sea level will be submerged. An important question to ask is where will these people go when the sea drives them from their homes? Which big country is willing to accept and to provide land for them?

A Call for International Metanoia

Focusing on the possible impacts of global warming and rising sea level, the author is convinced that a specific kind of eco-theology

A Pacific eco-theology must also aim to challenge those responsible for these ecological issues, to cry for global justice and the liberation of the Pacific people and their environments.

A Pacific eco-theology involves a call to conversion, metanoia

must emerge, one that will address the ecological issues in the Pacific and how these issues form a serious threat to the lives of thousands of people living on low-lying atolls. A Pacific eco-theology must also aim to challenge those responsible for these ecological issues, to cry for global justice and the liberation of the Pacific people and

their environments. A Pacific eco-theology involves a call to conversion, *metanoia*.

Cardinal Paulo Evaristo Arns states: “The theologian’s principal role is to hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church through the cry of the poor and the oppressed, and to see all the energies of the people of God in the perspective of liberation, which is the effective name today for the transforming power of the gospel (Rom 1:16-17)”.²⁶ In the liberation process the role of all people is essential. No single person or group can bring about liberation but only with the cooperation of all.

A Pacific eco-theology will challenge the oppressors, that is, the powerful industrial nations, to change

A change of attitude or conversion for those responsible for the ecological issues in the Pacific, however, will not be enough if this does not lead to concrete and practical actions

their attitude, lifestyle and activities that lead to the exploitation and oppression of the Pacific people and the degradation of their environment. “Universal love is that which in solidarity with

the oppressed seeks also to liberate the oppressors from their own power, from their ambition, and from their selfishness”.²⁷ A change of attitude or conversion for those responsible for the ecological issues in the Pacific, however, will not be enough if this does not lead to concrete and practical actions.

There is an urgent need to develop a contextual theology which will focus not only on the need to respect and to care for the environments in the Pacific but also the need to respect the lives of the people of the Pacific. In other words, commitment to respect the environment and the liberation of the Pacific people are two sides of the same coin.

The Bible, Creation and Ecology

The story of creation in the first chapter of Genesis clearly tells us that God is the creator of all that exists on this earth. The role and function of God as the creator helps us to understand the relationship between God and creatures. “The Bible presents the non-human creatures as



the inseparable companions of humanity in creation, reconciliation, and redemption".²⁸ This biblical teaching about God as creator not only of men and women but of all creatures should remind us of the sacredness of everything around us. Among all that God created man and woman have a special place by the fact that they are made in the image and likeness of God (cf. Gen. 1:27).

In order to lessen the danger being done to our ecological environment, people must come to realize that they are part of creation and that their survival also depends on their environment. One concrete example is the fact that without water we cannot survive. People must not think that they own the earth. People live and die, come and go but the land or the earth remains. Since God created the earth and everything in it, the land therefore belongs to Him. Some Old Testaments passages remind us of this fundamental truth. "*The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine; with me you are but aliens and tenants*" (Lev 25:23). The book of Leviticus is reminding us that we, who live in this world are only strangers or visitors. Some of us come into the world and stay for few days, weeks, months and years. Even the most developed and powerful nations cannot claim that they own the earth or people living on this planet. They, too, will leave this world behind. This idea is expressed more clearly by the psalmist: "*The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it; for he has founded it on the seas, and established it on the rivers*" (Ps 24:1-2).

The prayer of David in 1 Chronicles 29:10-13 says: "Yours, O Lord, are the greatness, the power, ...and the majesty; for all that is in the heavens and on the earth is yours" (v.11). The above texts are

If this world belongs to God, then people have the obligation and the responsibility to nurture and to take care of the earth and all the people living on this planet.

enough to warn and to challenge everyone, especially the powerful industrial nations; that the earth, including its people, does not belong to the rich and powerful nations but to God alone. If this world belongs to God, then people have the obligation and the responsibility to nurture and to take care of the earth and all the people living on this planet.

The Land: The book of Deuteronomy reminds the Israelites not to

forget to thank God for the gift of the land: “*You shall eat your fill and bless the Lord your God for the good land that he has given you*” (8:10). “The land given to the people is understood as God’s table laid with care for God’s people, a table God lays with bread, fruits and flowers every morning. The land is a cup of joy God fills every day for his children. The land is a large round of bread God bakes every morning and breaks for his people. … It is God’s own body, the love reality that is God become flesh”.²⁹ The people of the Pacific, whose home islands are predicted to be underwater if the current sea level continues to rise in the next few decades, believe that God has given them a lovely place to dwell in, a place that they call a home. They also pray and believe that God will not let this happen. Even though some people from the Pacific have faith in God for protecting their islands from the effect of sea level rise, what the scientists are predicting about the future of these atolls must also be taken seriously. Trusting in God will not solve the problem. The fundamental point is for those who are responsible for these ecological issues to do something about it. This includes a change in their policies, attitudes, and industrial activities.

Stewardship: Traditionally, there has been a wrong emphasis on the role and place of human beings in relation to other creatures. The emphasis on human beings’ role to subdue and to dominate nature is regarded as one factor contributing to the ecological crisis. People must not forget that they are called to become good stewards of God’s creation.

The teaching that human beings alone are created in the image of God and are commanded by God to exercise “dominion” over all the other creatures has given Western civilization religious justification for treating the natural environment in a ruthless and brutal manner. All of our wanton destruction of nature is sanctioned in the name of fulfilling the divine command.³⁰

Daniel Milgiore goes on to say that “seen in the light of what Christians hold to be the central biblical message, the command of God to



humanity to have dominion calls for respect, love, and care for the good creation. It is a summons to wise stewardship rather than selfish indulgence, to leadership within the commonwealth of creatures rather than a license for exploitation".³¹ According to the witness of Scripture at its deepest level, therefore, there is no absolute right of humanity over nature; on the contrary, human beings are entrusted with its care and protection.

The scriptures affirm the wholeness and inter-relatedness of the entire created order. Human conduct and actions whether good or evil have an impact on the environment. "When people curse, lie, murder, steal, and commit adultery, the land mourns, and the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea begin dying (Hos 4:2-3). This depicts the solidarity of the entire

creation, where everything is perceived as one interconnected whole".³²

The powerful industrial nations need to realize that whatever they do in their own countries will have a great impact on the environments and above all on the lives of other innocent people. If the emission of greenhouse gases is the main contributing factor to global warming and consequently to the rise in sea level, then these big nations must do something to lessen the problem. People in the United States need to be aware that their industrial activities have harmful effects on the lives of the people of the Pacific and on their environment as well.

Nature: The Scriptures affirm the value of nature in various ways: Nature has value in itself because it is valued by God. This provides intrinsic value to nature, a value that is not contingent on human utility.³³ Because God recognizes the goodness of creation, the Christian cannot call it evil or even regard it as something to be avoided (Gen 1:31). Biblical faith requires the affirmation of the goodness of nature and rejection of any form of dualism that says the physical realm is in some way contemptible.

Many biblical texts tell us about the importance and value of creation in relation to God, to people and in relation to their very existence. Creation reminds us about the loving creative power and care of God, the creator who made heaven and earth (Ps 124:8). Contemplating the beauty of

The scriptures affirm the wholeness and inter-relatedness of the entire created order

creation can bring us closer to the one who created all these things. In his First Letter to Timothy, Paul reminds us that “*everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving*”(1 Tim 4:4). One question that must be asked of the industrial nations is: what do they value most? Is it their economy, money, wealth, or the lives of the people and their environments? If the world and all that is in it have great value in the eyes of God then, we, too, must develop in ourselves great respect and love for God’s creation and above all the lives of people. A true committed Christian needs to have his priorities right; the lives of the people and the integrity of creation must come first before wealth, money and riches.

Another biblical affirmation is the purposes God intended for creation. God’s creation of nature contradicts the common understanding that nature’s sole purpose is human utility. Creation in itself is a manifestation of God’s loving presence, and beauty. By their existence, movement, and beauty, created things give praise and glory to God; they are not merely there to be used and exploited by human beings. People must learn to love, respect and to nurture the earth and not to destroy it. If people living in industrial nations adopt more positive attitudes toward the environment then, the people of the Pacific will expect some changes and will have hope for the future of their islands. People need to protect and to preserve their environment if they believe that nature is the manifestation of God’s loving presence and beauty.

Another environmentally relevant affirmation the Scriptures make is that redemption extends not only to humans but also includes nature (Rom 8:20-21; Eph 1:10; Col 1:20). “Salvation means making something whole or healing broken relations. In biblical thought it pertains to healing the wounds of the fall, bringing the entire creation back into the harmonious conditions of the original creation. The believer is called on to affirm that God’s salvation extends to all creation and then to participate in its healing”.³⁴

In Paul’s Letter to the Romans (8:22-23), he “speaks of the natural world as groaning like a woman in childbirth, even as humanity also groans for its final liberation from suffering and death. According to the biblical witness, we human beings exist in a solidarity of life and death with the whole groaning and expectant creation”.³⁵ The Book of



Revelation also speaks about “a new heaven and a new earth” (Rev. 21:1).

There is an urgent call for people to relate the idea of restoration and salvation not only to human beings but also to all created things, as mentioned in the Letter to the Romans. In applying this text to our situation today, there is an important role and obligation for all people to heal the earth from all forms of exploitation and destruction.

The Christian Voice of Eco-theology today

In his article, ‘Ecology’ Denis Carroll states that, “theology must keep in mind the seriousness of the issue. Environmental concern is about the survival not simply of this group or that, but the survival of our shared planet”.³⁶

Thomas Berry, who is considered as a leading Catholic historian of culture, has written on ecological issues.³⁷ His writings include a call to acknowledge the religious dimension of environmental issues: the extinction of species, the degradation of many of the most important eco-systems on earth, and the role of technology in the modern world. In his article, “The primordial imperative,” he points out three conditions for entering into a viable future. For him, “the first and most important condition is to recognize that the universe is a communion of subjects, not a collection of objects”.³⁸ He implies that there are not two separate communities (human and natural) but one earth community. “The second condition is to appreciate that the earth is primary; humans are derivative”.³⁹ He indicates that all human activities must be judged primarily by the extent to which they foster a mutually enhancing humanity-earth relationship. He wants to remind people that human activities have an impact or effect on their environment (earth). “The third condition for a viable future, according to Thomas Berry is to recognize that in the future nothing much will happen within and to the natural world that does not involve humans”.⁴⁰ This last condition is an important one, in the context of modern ecological issues, because human lifestyle and activities are the main contributing factors for the problem of global warming and sea level rise.

Talking about the important role and responsibility that people have in relation to other living species on earth, Thomas Berry says:

As humans, we have our own distinctive capacity for communion with the other members of the community. They deserve our attention - that we hear their voices, respond to their expressions of beauty, and interact with them creatively within the universal dynamics of existence. We, who did not choose to live at this time, have been chosen - given a destiny to accept, protect, and foster the earth community.⁴¹

Commenting on the writings of Thomas Berry, Joseph Pathrapankal states that Berry “has emphasized the importance of religious traditions in empowering people to abandon the present way of “death” and to learn to live with the planet earth in a more intimate, satisfying and sustainable way”.⁴²

Jurgen Moltmann, the Lutheran professor of systematic theology at Tubingen University since 1967 says that:

Ecological reformation of society will require a new spirituality and a new theological architecture. The previous mentality of dominion and exploitation will have to be replaced by a new, cosmic spirituality. ... We will rediscover God’s hidden immanence in nature and will respect the divine presence in all creatures. “No creature is so distant from God that it would not have God within itself” (Thomas Aquinas). “The Spirit of God fills the world” (Wisdom 1:7), it keeps all life alive and together in a vivifying, supportive community”.⁴³

*“Now, human beings are beginning to realize that such an attitude towards nature actually threatens human happiness, even human existence itself”.*⁴⁶

Metropolitan John of Pergamon⁴⁴ is a senior bishop of the Patriarchate of Constantinople and is Co-Chairman of the Anglican-Orthodox

Dialogue. He states strongly that “the ecological problem is, at root, a spiritual issue”.⁴⁵ He goes on to say that in the past Western theology



has over-emphasised the role of man to ‘dominate the earth’ which leads people to develop a superior kind of attitude toward their environment. “Now, human beings are beginning to realize that such an attitude towards nature actually threatens human happiness, even human existence itself”.⁴⁶

Metropolitan John suggests that human self-interest and the attitude of dominating and conquering the earth must be replaced by love for the rest of God’s creation or of a feeling of responsibility for the survival and welfare of all living and non-living creatures on this planet. There is a need to stress and to promote the idea of the “sacredness of creation in all its aspects, spiritual as well as material”.⁴⁷ He says that this new outlook and attitude needs to be implemented particularly in the Western culture. Unlike the West, there developed in the East “a spirituality involving a deep respect for nature which is strongly conditioned by the view that nature acquires sacredness only in and through the human person. This gives humanity decisive importance and responsibility”.⁴⁸ People living in Western culture need to change their attitude toward their environment and to adopt an attitude of respect, care and concern to the environment. People need to be reminded that “the material creation is not treated as a means of obtaining pleasure and happiness for the individual, but as a sacred gift from God which is meant to foster and promote communion with God and with others”.⁴⁹

Metropolitan John says that in Christian ethics, sin has been normally understood in anthropological and sociological terms alone, because nature came to be understood as a ‘servant’ of humanity’s self-interest and happiness. In other words “sin became only what caused harm to oneself or to other human beings”.⁵⁰ This means that damage to nature or the exploitation of nature was not regarded as ‘sin’.

The new concept of ‘sin’ must include one’s relationship to the environment. “Sin against nature, therefore, is serious not only because it involves disrespect towards a divine gift, but also and mainly because it renders the human being incapable of fulfilling its relational nature. Human individualism goes hand-in-hand with sin against nature: the ecological crisis bears eloquent witness to that”.⁵¹

Richard A. Young also supports this view when he says that “abuse of the land or animals constitutes a sin against God because it harms God’s

creation, ignores God's injunction for proper stewardship, and deviates from God's purpose in creation".⁵² If people are aware of the harmful consequences of their actions to the environment and the health of other people, then they might try to lessen environmental degradation and learn to protect and to preserve the environment.

In his article, 'Ecology', Denis Carroll states that: "concern about the environment engages values such as reverence for creation, stewardship of the earth's resources, and responsibility towards our fellow inhabitants of a threatened planet. Ecology, in the sense of practical concern for our earthly habitat, is also about solidarity with generation yet to come".⁵³ The call to love and care for the environment is also a concern of Richard A. Young.

The bible calls us to love God and everything God created. It sets forth an ethic which recognizes that ... (air, land, and water) are intended to benefit the entire ecological community and must not be polluted or damaged in any way. We are obliged before God to ensure a benevolent and just use of His earth and, at the same time, to preserve the harmony and integrity of creation.⁵⁴

Ecological-Asceticism and a New Ethics

There is a need to develop a new kind of spirituality or asceticism, one that includes a deep respect for God's creation, in order to confront the ecological crisis. Metropolitan John describes 'ecological asceticism' as one which begins "with deep respect for the material creation, including the human body, and builds upon the view that we are not masters and possessors of this creation, but are called to turn it into a vehicle of communion, always taking into account and respecting its possibilities as well as its limitations".⁵⁵ This 'ecological asceticism' must try to fight against the consumerist philosophy of life that prevails in our world today. Restriction in our use and exploitation of natural resources can lead to a life that is happier than the endless competition of spending and acquiring more and more.



In recent years Christian ethics has realized that commitment for justice does not only involve human moral obligations to other human beings and to God but also moral obligations to the environment. Janet Parker, puts it beautifully when she says that “in the last couple of decades, and especially the last few years, Christian ethicists have joined their secular counterparts in reexamining human obligations to plants, animals, and ecosystems in light of growing ecological devastation”.⁵⁶ She states that although the writings on ecology by Christian ethics are diverse “two themes have been dominant: that a theocentric ethic requires loving care of all of creation; and that the Christian commitment to justice is incomplete without a concomitant concern for ecology”.⁵⁷

All beings within nature deserve respect: they all have their identity. ... Hence we can rightly speak of an ecological justice – that is, of a just relationship with the beings in creation - for they are all around us, and in some sense they are also citizens. Thus arises a spirituality in which the human city is human not simply by the fact that it is made up of persons and institutions; plants, the waters, the pure air, the animals, and healthy conditions of material life are also to be brought together in harmony.⁵⁸

Attitudes of Indigenous People to the Environment

Australian Aborigines: The aspect of showing reverence and respect for the environment is beautifully expressed by Miriam-Rose, an Australian Aborigine; “We still have a special respect for nature. The identity we have with the land is sacred and unique. Many people are beginning to understand this more”.⁵⁹ She continues: “All the bush is part of my life. I was born under a tree. My mother showed me the place. She showed me where I used to play, and where I would hunt for wild honey. The feeling I have for this place is very special. This place where I was born-it is me”.⁶⁰

The intimate connection between the Aboriginal people and their



environment creates a good positive relationship between themselves and the earth. The earth is considered as ‘mother’ who nourishes and upholds people. “Reverence is born of waiting and watching what is beyond our power, accepting that we are of the earth, and knowing we are shaped by the land of our birth”.⁶¹

American Indians: The statement made by Chief Seattle in 1854, as a response to the Great White Chief in Washington (who had offered the Indians a large area of land) is considered one of the most beautiful statements on the environment. It expresses clearly the contrasting attitude of the Western people and the indigenous people regarding the intimate relationship between people and their land.

Every part of this earth is sacred to my people. Every shining pine needle, every sandy shore, every mist in the dark woods, every clearing and humming insect is holy in the memory and experience of my people. The sap which courses through the trees carries the memories of the red man. The white man’s dead forget the country of their birth when they go to walk among the stars. Our dead never forget this beautiful earth, for it is the mother of the red man. We are part of the earth and it is part of us. The perfumed flowers are our sisters, the deer, the horses, the great eagle, these are our brothers. The rocky crests, the juices in the meadows, the body heat of the pony, and man – all belong to the same family.⁶²

Pacific Islanders: Unlike the Western attitude toward nature, many people from the Third World countries show a very positive and caring approach to their environment. Suliana Siwatibau, a Fijian from the Pacific, warns us that science and technology need to adopt a loving concern for the environment so that there could be less ecological issues. She says that, “if the basic philosophy of our science and technology were to envision nature as a nurturing mother to be respected, rather than a wandering female to be raped and dominated, we may have a greater change for environmentally sustainable development”.⁶³



The need for global solidarity for the ‘common good’

The fact that the earth is a common home for us all means that all people need to be in solidarity with others and their environments. If all the citizens of the world work together to heal the earth, there is hope for a better world. “We belong to one human family and as such have mutual obligations to promote the development of all people across the world”.⁶⁴ Concern for people and the earth must never be separated.

The present pope says that solidarity is the ‘virtue’ that best captures the relationships, the interdependencies, that link all in all. If solidarity is the ‘path to peace and development’, it is also the essential virtue to bind all living and non-living matter in a profound embrace. Solidarity among people has no basis unless it is equally grounded in a solidarity with nature. The earth itself is calling forth this new awareness, this new sense of each and all belonging to a whole.⁶⁵

According to Jane Blewet, “the ‘common good’ must include all who share the ‘common’ - trees and toads, water and rocks, meadows and mountains, birds and bees, women and men”.⁶⁶

Human beings must be aware of the fact that they have an important responsibility to show solidarity for the earth of which they are part.

Working for the common good must always include caring for the earth. This new kind of attitude is urgently needed in the industrial and western countries. As Edward Schillebeeckx puts it:

The relationship of the human being to his own corporeality ... and by means of his own corporeality

Human beings must be aware of the fact that they have an important responsibility to show solidarity for the earth of which they are part

to the wider sphere of nature and his own ecological environment, is constitutive of our humanity. ... If we take no account of this human reference in our action, then in the long term we shall dominate nature or condition people in so one-sided a way that in fact we shall destroy the fundamental principles of our own natural world and thus make our own humanity impossible by attacking our natural household or our ecological basis. Our relationship with nature and our own corporeality come up against boundaries which we have to respect if we are to live a truly human life and, in an extreme instance, if we are to survive.⁶⁷

Solidarity and commitment for the common good must always include both human life and the environment. Today there is a growing awareness that caring for the people entails caring for the earth as well. After all, people cannot survive on this planet without plants, animals, water, other living and non-living organisms. The survival and integrity of the human person depends largely on the integrity of creation. In responding to the contemporary ecological issues in the Pacific, especially global warming and the rising sea level, the author is convinced that a specific kind of eco-theology must emerge. This eco-theology must involve the cry for global justice and the liberation of both the people of the Pacific and their islands. People of the Pacific cannot fully achieve or experience their human dignity, liberation and freedom if their environment – their land and their oceans - are being exploited.

God's agenda for us involves the dual concern to care for both nature and people, tasks that could be subsumed under one responsibility-to glorify God. ... Concern for people cannot be divorced from concern for the environment, and vice versa. ... It is our self-seeking that cause both social injustice (exploitation of people) and environmental destruction (degradation of nature).⁶⁸



A Pacific eco-theology should also aim to raise the consciousness of the international community about the situation in the Pacific and to challenge those who are responsible for causing these ecological problems to change their attitudes, polices, activities and lifestyles. By doing so the oppressors might also be liberated from their lack of concern, insensitivity, selfishness and inhuman activities.

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The analysis of ecological issues in the Pacific is enough to convince us that both ecological issues in the Pacific, and above all the possible threat to the lives and homes of the Pacific people, are the consequences of the industrial activities of powerful nations. This is indeed a clear struggle between the poor and the rich, the powerless and the powerful, the least developed countries and the most developed countries, small island nations and big nations.

In regard to the Pacific peoples' situation and the contemporary ecological issues, the author is convinced that "the joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the people of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted in any way, are the joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well".⁶⁹

At the dawn of this new millennium there is an urgent need for global solidarity, one that is committed to the liberation of the poor and the oppressed, global justice, peace and the integrity of creation. As a Pacifican, the author is totally against so-called "globalisation" which is oppressive, exploits and ignores the dignity of human life, and causes further destruction to the environment. A genuine Christian commitment to protect and to preserve human life must never be separated from one's respect and care for the environment. Global solidarity can be achieved to some extent if everyone strives to think globally and to act locally.

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Book Review: *20th Century Fiji: People who Shaped this Nation.*

Stewart Firth and Daryl Tarte (ed).

The University of the South Pacific, Suva, 2001

ISBN 9820104211

Reviewed by: Rev. C.O. Malony, St. Columbans, Suva

As part of the Millennium celebrations the National Millennium Committee decided to identify the men and women who significantly influenced the course of Fiji's history in the 20th Century.

The basis for selection was that the person should have been a Fiji resident, from different cultures and all walks of life, whose endeavours had a long term impact on the course of Fiji's history.

The book is divided into four periods, each of 25 years. It opens with a short history of Fiji up to 1900. Then each quarter century is introduced by a general history of the period. These are written by Stewart Firth, Professor of History at USP.

Across the stage set by these historical introductions the 70 people selected to portray aspects of life in Fiji are presented. Together they embrace every aspect of life in Fiji. They represent Religion and Politics; Fijian and Indian leadership; Sugar and Copra; Gold and Tourism; Education and Health; Civil Service and Army; and many more.

For people prominent in religious leadership the editors have chosen Mother Mary Agnes for her work with lepers on Makogai, Hannah Dudley, for education for Indian girls; Totaram Sanadhy, for cultural and religious welfare of his people; Usaia Sotutu, Methodist missionary in Bougainville, Sadhu Kuppuswami, founder of Sangam; Brother Lambert for education; Setareki Tuilovoni, first Fijian President of the Methodist Church; Fr. Marion Ganey for Credit Unions.

Each biography is accompanied by a photo and other photos of the period enliven the book.

It is an easy book to read. Open it at any page and one is immediately caught by a life that had, and in many cases is still having, an impact on the life and culture of Fiji. The tendency is to read on, looking for more.

The book has been co-ordinated by U.S.P. and funded by Colonial.

Book Note: *Ministering Asian Faith and Wisdom, A Manual for Theological Librarians in Asia*

Rita and John England.

New Day Publishers: Philippines and The Indian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (ISPCK): India

ISBN 971-10-1057-7

The sub-title of the book is what should catch the attention of theological educators, 'A Manual for Theological Librarians'. Librarians in theological institutions are often in a lonely position without much support in their task of providing resources for the educators and students.

This manual is a very useful tool for any librarian. It has much valuable information and insight for theological educators and librarians in the Pacific as well as Asia. Even the Asian flavour of the book should not be seen to disadvantage it in Pacific eyes; Asia is, after all, our neighbouring region in the world.

The Manual has three parts. The first entitled 'Theology and Resources' contains some helpful theologising. The approach of the book is to give dignity, importance and theological purpose to the work of librarians



in theological schools. To quote from the first chapter: “..... we reflect on the place in which we stand, what are our own local, national and regional resources, and how these can change the focus of our library collections to prepare our users for God’s mission where we are.” Libraries are much more than a collection of books from the past and from other cultures. Librarians are called to promote and collect local materials for theologising and theological education. This first part of the Manual also includes a theological reflection for librarians.

The second section of this Manual gives practical guidelines applicable in almost every library situation, set out in ten chapters each of which deals with a specific aspect of library creation and care.

A final section lists resources for Asian librarians, many of which are also applicable for Pacific theological libraries. The Manual concludes with a message of encouragement to theological librarians.

Book Note

Three books received from Claretian Publications, Inc. U.P.P.O. Box 4, Dilman, 1101 Quezon City, Philippines:

ASIA-CHURCH IN MISSION - James H. Kroeger - This gives the story of mission initiatives in Asia and some of the realities and challenges facing missionaries and evangelists in Asia.

TELLING GOD’S STORY - Resources and Documents from National Mission Congress 2000. This is a selection of materials which are lively and stimulating for everyone engaged in the mission of the Church in whatever place they work.

TELL THE WORLD - material for mission groups. A well presented and simple manual for small groups entering into evangelism.

These books, all dealing with mission in the Asian context, are relevant for all evangelists, most particularly the second two, "Telling God's Story" and "Tell the World" which contain both mission theology and practical

Pacific Journal of Theology Policy Statement

The Pacific Journal of Theology is published twice yearly by the South Pacific Association of Theological Schools. It seeks to stimulate theological thinking and writing by Christians living in or familiar with the South Pacific, and to share these reflections with church and theological education communities, and with all who want to be challenged to reflect critically on their faith in changing times. Opinions and claims made by contributors to the Journal are solely those of the authors, and do not necessarily reflect those of the Editorial Board or the South Pacific Association of Theological Schools.

The Editorial Board welcomes various kinds of writing which express an emerging Pacific theology. These may include:

- * Original articles in the theological disciplines;
- * Articles relating theological thinking to Pacific cultures, contemporary issues, and other academic disciplines;
- * Helpful material for pastors and church workers (liturgical, pastoral, educational);
- * Artistic expressions of the Christian faith (poetry, visual art, music);



- * Notes and reviews of books which are relevant for Pacific Christians;
- * Information about ongoing research in the theological disciplines in the Pacific.

Notes for Contributors

The Editor will consider for publication all manuscripts of scholarly standard and in keeping with the overall policy of this Journal. Poetry, photographs, black and white drawings are also welcome. Articles should be clearly typed in double spacing on one side of the paper only. Any sources quoted or paraphrased should be listed in endnotes and a bibliography at the end of the articles, including author, title, city, publisher and date of publication. Please include brief autobiographical data.

Author's Agreement Form

The Editorial Board requires a signed Author's Agreement form from the contributor of any item in the Journal. This agreement gives legal protection and copyright to the South Pacific Association of Theological Schools. A form will be sent to the author following acceptance of a contribution.

Language

The Editorial Board will accept articles in French and Pacific languages with an abstract in English language.

NOTICE BOARD

Consultations, Study Projects etc. in the Region

1. “Towards a Culture of Peace”

An ongoing consultation on strategies for peace-building. The first workshop organized by ECREA was held in Fiji in October, 2001.

2. “Who is my Neighbour, my Sister, my Brother”

An ongoing consultation sponsored by ECREA in response to the present situation in Fiji.

3. Pacific Contextual Theology

A four-year programme being undertaken by SPATS to help our local Pacific theologians articulate and own their theology. Its objective is to see the role that ‘contextual theology’ could play in the rise of nationalism/indigenous people’s cultural self-understanding in the Pacific Island region. A first conference was held recently at Nadave in October, 2001 after which four sub-regional workshops will be held between 2002-2003. A final conference is planned for 2005 to finalise and produce materials for a reference book on Pacific contextual theology.



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